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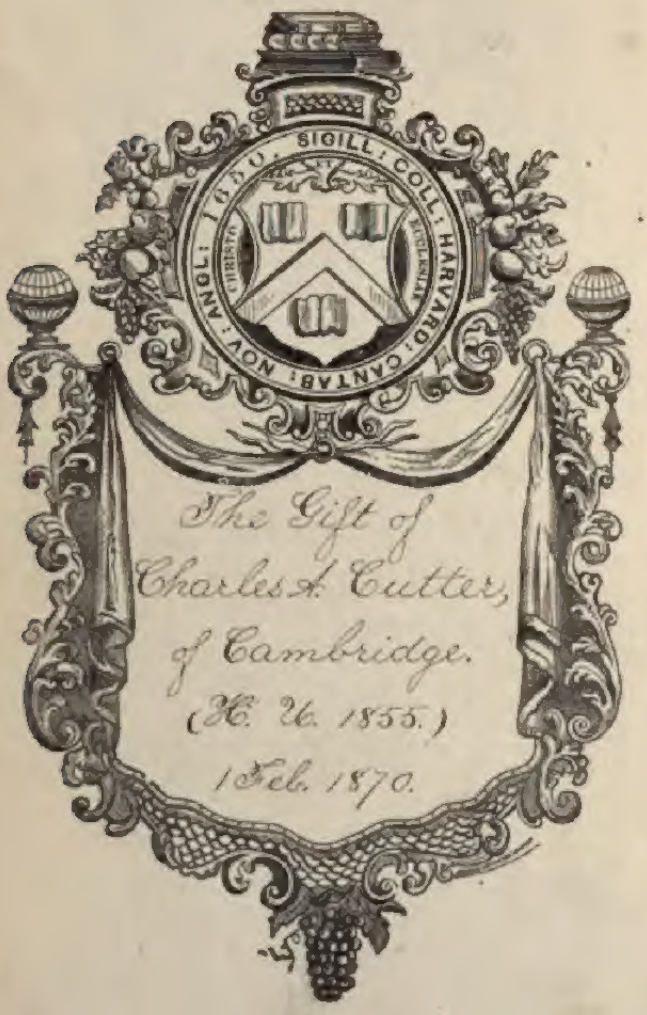
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SERMONS

BY

RICHARD WHATELY, D.D.,

ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

THE SECOND EDITION,
WITH ADDITIONS.

SERMONS

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

DELIVERED IN SEVERAL CHURCHES
IN THE CITY OF DUBLIN,

AND

IN OTHER PARTS OF THE DIOCESE.

BY RICHARD WHATELY, D.D.,
ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

LONDON:
JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.
M.DCCC.XLIX.

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TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

THE present Edition contains Four additional Sermons, all of which have been at different times published separately.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons do not constitute a series. They were delivered in several churches,—in some instances at considerable intervals; —and not all of them to congregations of precisely the same description. Most of them accordingly will be found to have no more connexion with each other than "that uniformity of thought and design which will always be found in the writings of the same person, when he writes with simplicity and in earnest."

The subjects touched on in some of them are such as I should have thought it desirable, had circumstances permitted, to

develop more fully, and arrange more systematically; but I found that I could not look forward with any reasonable confidence to a period of such unbroken leisure as would have been requisite for such a work. My only practical alternative therefore was, either to publish these Discourses nearly as they were delivered, or to suppress them altogether. The publication of several of them was requested by the persons to whom they were, respectively, addressed; and as it is seldom advisable to publish single sermons, except such as have some peculiar circumstances of local or temporary interest, I have thought it best to collect them into a volume. Three, however, of these have been already published separately; one, in the volume of "Family Sermons," edited by the Education-Committee of the Christian-Knowledge-Society; and two others, for the benefit of the Charities which they respectively advocate. These last are now republished, as well as

another of the same description, because they are not confined to the immediate objects which gave occasion to them, but treat of subjects which, it is hoped, may prove interesting to the Christian reader generally.

I ought, perhaps, to apologize for having retained the style which was adopted with a view rather to oral delivery than to the closet: but being prevented, for the reason above mentioned, from recasting the whole matter into the form of more regular treatises, instead of publishing Sermons, as such, I have thought it best to make little or no alteration in them; leaving them to appear as that which they were originally designed for—addresses to a congregation.

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SERMON I.

LUKE II. 14.

On earth, peace.

THE hymn of the angels who announced to the shepherds the birth of Jesus, appears probably to most persons, at the first glance, to require no explanation. That the religion of Jesus Christ is calculated to promote not only God's glory, but also universal peace and mutual good-will among mankind, and that the wars and strifes which have prevailed in the world are inconsistent with the spirit of the religion (which is undoubtedly a true description of it), may appear, at first sight, to be all that was intended to be conveyed in the angelic annunciation.

But on a more attentive consideration of the passage, in connexion with other parts of Scripture, you will see that it must have meant

something beyond this; for you will observe that the angels were not *recommending* peace, but *proclaiming* it. They are not exhorting *men*, but praising God. Their language is not that of our Lord, when He said, "Blessed are the peace-makers;" or of the Apostle Paul, when he exhorted Christians to "live peaceably with all men:" the words of the heavenly Host are not a *precept* or a *persuasive* to peace, but an *announcement* of it, as a part of the "Gospel (or good-tidings) of great joy," which they were commissioned to bring.

And yet not only does sad experience teach us that universal "peace on earth," even between Christians, has not ensued; but Jesus Christ foretold that no such result would ensue; nay, and that his own religion would be made an occasion of discord. "Think ye," said He, "that I am come to send peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division." And again, "I am come to send fire on the earth:" and He goes on to foretell that not only persecutions awaited his followers, on account of their religion, but that it would itself lead to dissension even among friends, and that a "man's foes should be those

of his own household." Not, of course, that Christianity is to be regarded as properly the *cause* of that strife of which it furnished the occasion; for we know that not only other *religions* have occasioned the most bitter animosities, but political, and even philosophical, factions have, from time to time, served to kindle into a blaze all the contentious fury, and all the persecuting cruelty, of which the sparks are contained in the breast of the natural man.

But the remarkable circumstance, in reference to the subject now before us, is, that the promulgation of Christianity, though it was not the cause and *beginning* of all this, did not put an *end* to it; and that the Author of our faith foresaw and foretold this.

His doing so (it may be remarked by the way), is among the many proofs of his prophetic power, and of the truth of his Gospel. He who taught the most pacific and beneficent religion,—"who did no violence," and forbad his disciples to use any,—yet foresaw, what no enthusiast could have foreseen,—and *foretold*, what no impostor would have been *willing* to

foretell,—that his religion would expose his followers to persecution, and would be made an occasion of strife.

But still it remains to be explained how all this is to be reconciled, not only with the proclamation of peace by the angels, but also with many other parts of Scripture which speak the same language.

The promised Messiah was described prophetically under the title of "the Prince of Peace:" "Peace I leave with you," is his own declaration to his disciples; Peter describes the gospel-dispensation by the expression of "preaching *peace* by Jesus Christ;" and Paul calls it "the Gospel of Peace;" with many other like expressions.

Now how, it may be asked, can we reconcile these two things; on the one hand, the strife and hostile contention which have not only continued to prevail in the world, but which were even prophesied by our Lord Jesus Christ; and, on the other hand, the descriptions given of "the Gospel of Peace," and the proclamation of it made by the angels.

The truth is, that what they proclaimed was,

peace between God and man. This will be evident if you look not only to the New, but also to the Old Testament, and contrast the Mosaic dispensation with the Gospel. At the time when the Law was delivered to the Israelites, all other Nations, (or Gentiles, or Heathen; for these three words have all the same meaning) had forsaken or grossly corrupted the worship of the true God, and had fallen into the most abominable idolatries. I say "abominable," because independent of the falsity and superstition of the Pagan religions, most of them were, and are to this day, in the highest degree immoral; teaching men to seek the favour of their gods, for the most part, by acts of the foulest impurity, and the most infernal cruelty. Those who are acquainted with the religions, *e. g.* of the East Indies at the present day, can bear witness to this. And the same accounts you may find in the Old Testament of the worship of the idolaters of old; "Every abomination of the Lord that He hateth, have these nations done *unto their gods;* for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire unto their gods." Yet all these nations were descended

from the same first parents, who had had the knowledge and worship of the true God; the tradition of this knowledge and worship they had gradually corrupted and defiled to the utmost excess, till they were utterly sunk in superstition and wickedness.

Hence, the Apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesians to "walk henceforth not as the other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Hence, they are always represented in Scripture as rebels,—outcasts,—aliens,—*enemies* of God; and they are contrasted with the Israelites, who were God's own, favoured, and peculiar people, separated from other nations,—distinguished by a revelation of God,—dedicated to Him,—and honoured by the title of his Son. (Exod. iv. 22.) Thou shalt say to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my Son, even my first-born; and I say unto thee, let my Son go that he may serve me."

Against some of the most wicked of these Heathen, as the Canaanites and Amalekites, we find the Israelites on some occasions appointed to be the executioners of God's judgments: and though it is far from true, as some have pretended, that they were commissioned, or allowed, universally to wage war with idolatrous nations, they were always taught to regard themselves as God's chosen or elect people, distinguished from all others by privileges altogether peculiar. "What nation is there," said Moses, "so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is, in all things that we call upon him for?"

And so, in the Psalms, "He hath not dealt so with any nation, neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws." And the same sort of language you may find in numberless other places.

The unbelieving Jews of the present day cling still, as is well known, to the persuasion that, notwithstanding the destruction of their city, and dispersion of their nation, they are the peculiar people of God, in whose sight all we Gentiles are regarded as outcasts; and that the

promised Messiah will one day come to put all other nations under their feet.

Those Jews who acknowledged the pretensions of Jesus, agreed fully (as you may see from what they have left us written in the New Testament), with those who rejected Him, in teaching that all the Gentiles had, hitherto, been in this state of *enmity* with God; they differed from them only in maintaining that God had all along *designed*, and had then accomplished the design, of *putting an end* to this enmity, and offering terms of reconciliation to those who had been estranged from him;—"to all," as they expressed it, "that were afar off," but who were "elect, according to the *foreknowledge* of God."

Why this was not brought to pass long before,—why the darkness and wickedness of the heathen world were suffered to continue so long, without any thing being done to convert them,—is a question utterly unfathomable by human (perhaps even by angelic) wisdom; like many other difficulties, both in the natural and in the moral world, it must remain without an attempt to explain it (except such attempts as expose the rash presumption of weak and

arrogant men), at least as long as this life shall last. I have said, "many other difficulties," because in fact the difficulty is just as great to explain why *one* generation, as why twenty, should be suffered to live and die in sin and ignorance;—why one man, as why many millions, should be left at the present day strangers to Christianity, or to a pure and genuine Christianity:—to explain, in short, how *any evil*, however small, should exist, as to explain all that does exist in the world. The *mortifying and distressing* character, indeed, of any evil, is greater, according as the evil itself is the greater: but the *difficulty* of explaining it, when that difficulty amounts to an impossibility, must be the same in one case as in another. And such is in fact the state of the case. The existence of evil is the one great difficulty, of which most that are brought forward as objections to our religion are only particular instances. And those who have undertaken to clear it up, and have satisfied perhaps themselves, and others, that they have done so, are sure to be met by the very same difficulty reappearing in some different form; like a resistless stream,

which, when one of its channels is dammed up, immediately forces its way through another. To account for the existence of evil is to man totally impossible; and since total impossibility does not admit of different degrees, the smallest amount of misery and the greatest are equally inexplicable. The *suffering* indeed is much greater in the case of a whole nation degraded and wretched, than of a single individual; but the *difficulty* is the very same, if we are quite unable to account for either. Since one thing cannot be *more impossible* than another, to feed five thousand with five loaves, or to make five loaves become six, though the one miracle would confer a much more extensive and striking benefit than the other, are equally beyond the natural powers of man. All that we can say with respect to the dark and wretched state in which so many generations of mankind have been left, is that, *for some unknown cause*, evil is unavoidable: and that being the case, it would be a folly to pretend to *set limits* to the operation of an *unknown* cause, or to wonder at one of its effects more than at another.

And it is no less a folly to regard this difficulty

in the light of an *objection*, either to our own religion or to any other; since it would lie equally against all, as indeed it does against every system of philosophy likewise; for the ancient heathen were as much perplexed with doubts as to the origin of evil as we are. Even Atheism does not lessen — it only alters the difficulty: for as the believer in a God cannot account for the existence of evil, so the believer in *no* God cannot account for the existence of *good*; or indeed for the existence of any thing at all that bears marks of rational design. The Scriptures, instead of leading us into metaphysical questions on the origin of evil, which are beyond the reach of our faculties, lead us to practical inquiries as to the nature of such evils as afflict or threaten ourselves or our neighbours, and as to the means of escaping them, and of rescuing others.

Among the evils which Scripture dwells on with this view, the principal is, the state of *enmity against God*, and exposure to Divine displeasure, in which the world had long been. The Apostle Paul accordingly does not attempt to explain, *e.g.* to the Athenians, the cause of this

enmity having been suffered so long to continue; but proceeds at once to the practical point, of describing the evil, and offering the cure. "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

We know, indeed, that God cannot literally feel anger or any other passion, nor can be, literally, grieved and pained at any thing man can do; since (as our 1st Article expresses it,) "He is without body, parts, or passions;" though in Scripture hands, and eyes, and other bodily members are, figuratively, attributed to Him, as well as anger, repentance, and other passions. But all these are easily understood as spoken in reference to their *effects on us*; which are the same as if the things themselves were literally what they are called. It is well known to astronomers that the sun keeps its place; and yet they, as well as the vulgar, speak familiarly of the sun's rising and setting, without any mistake or perplexity thence arising; because the effects on this earth—the succession of light and darkness, are exactly the same as if the sun did literally move round it daily. In like manner when we speak of the eyes of God, we are

readily understood to be speaking in reference to the effects on us. He knows all that we do and that befalls us, as well and better than we know what passes before our eyes. And so also when the Scriptures speak of God's wrath, fierce anger, &c. against sinners, it is meant, not that *He* literally feels angry passions, but that the *effect* on men will be the same as if He did: that obstinate sinners will as surely *suffer*, as a subject would, who should provoke the real, literal, anger of a powerful earthly king.

The disobedient world then being thus children of wrath, and at enmity with God, he saw fit when, according to his unsearchable wisdom, "the fulness of time" was come, to send his Son into the world to *proclaim peace* to all who should hear and accept his offers. Jesus Christ was to encounter and overcome Satan,—to offer up Himself as a sacrifice,—"the just for the unjust,"—and to proclaim pardon not as if sin were a light thing in God's sight, but as purchased by the precious and "innocent blood." He came to "bind up the broken-hearted,—to preach deliverance to the captives;" and promised to come unto them that should love Him, and

to make his abode in them by his Spirit; that they might be enabled to follow the bright example He had set them, and thus to live in peace with God,—to become the sons of God, and after death to enter into his eternal rest.

It was the opening of this mysterious dispensation of mercy that was announced by the angels when they proclaimed "peace; and good will towards men." And Jesus Christ accordingly, and his followers, went about *proclaiming the good tidings;* in other words, *preaching the Gospel.* These two phrases have precisely the same meaning; but the latter of them, which is so familiarly used, is apt, perhaps for that very reason, not to be distinctly understood. The common expresssion of "preaching a sermon" is perhaps in strict propriety of language not correct; for the original meaning of the word "preach," and that which it always bears in Scripture, (as well as of the Greek word of which it is the translation,) is not to give instruction, or deliver arguments, but to *proclaim,* or announce as a herald. The word was never applied accordingly to the teaching of the ancient Greek philosophers, or of the Jewish

scribes who expounded the law of Moses; but to the proclamations of those who went about to bring the Gospel, i. e. *good-tidings*, of peace, pardon, and salvation, for those who had been God's enemies.

Peace accordingly in this sense you will find much and strongly spoken of by the sacred writers; and the more perhaps because the intelligence was not only most important, but, to those who received it, strange and unexpected, and to many of the Jews, very unwelcome. That the "Gentiles should be fellows-heirs,"—that God would "break down the wall of partition, putting no difference between them and the Jews,"—that they "who before were not a People, were now to be the People of God,"—this Mystery, as it is often called by the sacred writers, and which they so often advert to in such expressions as those just cited, was the wonder of the believers, and the stumbling-block to the unbelievers, among the Jews. Mary and Joseph *marvelled*, we are told, at hearing from Symeon[a]

[a] Symeon, there can be I think little doubt, was himself a converted—according to the common expression—a "devout Gentile," and thence was led to advert *first* to the en-

that Jesus was to be a "light to lighten the Gentiles:" and many who probably were otherwise disposed to receive the Gospel were "offended" at this part of his character. When the prodigal son (*i. e.* the Gentiles) was received with joy and feasting by his father, his brother "was angry, and would not come" in: when the labourers who had been called at the eleventh

lightening of the *Gentiles*, before he spoke of the "Glory of Israel."

The description of him as a "man in Jerusalem," seems much more suitable to a Gentile than to one of the Jewish nation: and again, the epithet which is rendered "devout," and which seems to have ordinarily signified one who had renounced idolatry and worshipped Jehovah, is, accordingly, very rarely indeed applied to Jews, and very frequently to Gentiles. The name indeed of Symeon seems Jewish; but this is no indication of his race, as it seems to have been common for those who had connexions both with Jews and Gentiles, to bear, in consequence, two names; as Silas or Silvanus,—Saul or Paul,—a man of the very name of "Symeon, who is also called Niger," and many others.

Symeon could not indeed, as a proselyte of the gate, or "devout Gentile," have gone "*into* the Temple," and *there* met the child, *after* Joseph and Mary had brought him in: but on looking to the original we find nothing more related there, than that Symeon went *to* the Temple, and accosted the parents as *they were bringing* in the child, *viz.* as they were passing through the court of the Gentiles.

hour (the Gentiles again) received equal payment, the others murmured to find them made equal to themselves.

For this reason the Apostles repeated the more frequently and earnestly their allusions to God's proclamation of peace. You will find such allusions in almost every passage of the New Testament (and they are very numerous) in which the words "peace" or "enmity" occur. For instance, (Col. i. 20; Eph. ii. 13,) Christ "having made *peace* through the blood of his cross," it pleased the Father "by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. And you, that were, some time, alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." So also to the Ephesians. "Ye *were* without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; having no hope, and without God, in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our *peace*:—that He might reconcile both [Jews and Gentiles] unto God, in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

Besides numberless other passages to the same effect.

And not only is the Gospel of peace announced in the manner I have stated, but care is taken by our Lord to warn his followers against supposing that it was temporal, worldly, peace He promised them; both in his prophecies of discord, already cited, and also when He is consoling his disciples, with an assurance of heavenly peace: "Peace," said He, "I leave with you: *my* peace I give unto you: not *as the world giveth*, give I unto you. In the world ye shall have *tribulation;* but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Still it is most true that one blessed result of Christianity, in proportion as it is received heartily and in the true spirit of it, is, mutual peace and good-will among mankind. Numberless are the exhortations to brotherly-love (*i. e.* love of Christians towards their fellow-Christians, as such),—to universal benevolence,—to meekness, compassionateness, forbearance, — numberless are the warnings against party-spirit, jealousy, strife, and hostile bitterness; and what is more, all these are clearly founded on the very

character of the evangelical doctrine. We are taught to forgive, "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us;"—to "love one another as He hath loved us;"—to be tender and considerate towards weak brethren "for whom Christ died," even as "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us;" and "to be gentle unto all men, in *meekness* instructing them that oppose themselves," since God "willeth not that any should perish."

But all this is the Christian's *duty;* not his *reward.* To labour, and often vainly to "labour for peace" in this world, is his appointed *trial;* peace with God is his promised *consolation.* His endeavours to promote universal peace (not with a view to his own interest and convenience, but from Christian benevolence) must be unremitting, for this is *his* concern; but his *enjoyment* of a peaceful life will in a great degree depend on *others.* All wars and tumults,—all animosity, and malice, and evil-speaking, would indeed be at an end, if all men were sincere Christians;—if, without being altogether perfect, they possessed that Christian temper, which the Author of our religion has made the *characteristic* of it; for

" by this," said He, " shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." But till that happy time shall come (if ever it is to come in this world), the Christian who himself possesses this temper, though he will practise and promote peaceable and beneficent conduct, must not expect always to meet with it. This world is the place of trial; the *next*, that of retribution. The promised benefit to himself is, *inward* peace, and the expectation of eternal peace hereafter.

And does not the offer of this reconcilement with God well deserve to be accounted " good-tidings of great joy," such as to fill with benevolent exultation the angels who brought the message? Every professed Christian will assent to this; and all Christian churches accordingly have ever celebrated a festival on this day;—have reckoned it a season of gladness, in commemoration of the birth of Jesus. And well may those rejoice who have a share in the benefits,—in the peace and salvation,—which He came to bring! The rich, and prosperous, and great in this world, see here set before them " the peace of God, which passeth all

understanding," and the prospect of such exaltation and enjoyment hereafter that all they can enjoy on earth fades away, in comparison, like the stars before the sun: the poor, the afflicted, the lowest of mankind in earthly rank, have the offer of that which makes all worldly goods and evils appear but as a drop of water to the ocean. Well, therefore, might the shepherds, who had received these good-tidings, "return home glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had heard and seen:" and well may the partakers of the same benefits rejoice as they did.

But is this "Gospel of peace," indeed, *good*-tidings to *all* who have heard it? It is so in a certain sense; since the *offer* of so great a benefit is freely made to those who *will* accept it. But will they all accept it? The greater part of the Jews, by rejecting the Christ, changed his good-tidings into evil for themselves: "Ye *will* not," said He, "come unto me that ye may have life." But it is not all who acknowledge Him that have really accepted his offer: He declares that he will reject, as strangers to Him, even those who have "preached in his name, and in his name done

many mighty works," if they "do not the things which He says." He bids us "strive to enter in at the strait gate;" because "wide is the gate, and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." There is, indeed, room enough at the narrow gate for all who will so strive: but there are many, He adds, who "will seek to enter in (seek *i. e.* in some different way from what He has appointed) and will not be able."

Yet still, the Gospel may be said to be, in a certain sense, good-tidings to *all* people who have had its gracious *offer* made them, though they may transform it into an evil. It was surely a great deliverance that God wrought for the Israelites, when He opened them a path through the Red Sea; though if any had refused to escape by this path from their pursuers, it would have been no deliverance to *them*. When they were fainting with thirst in the wilderness, it was good-tidings that a rock had been cleft by divine power, and that a stream was flowing from it; though the benefit of this would have been lost to any who should have refused to slake their thirst at it. And it was good-tidings

also that God had invited them to take possession of the good land which He had promised to their fathers, on condition that they would be indeed his people and obey his laws: and this, not the less, though the whole generation who came out of Egypt, with the exception of two persons, perished in the wilderness through their disobedience.

And so it is now with Christians. A path is opened to them which leads from the "house of bondage," even "from the bondage of corruption," to "the glorious liberty of the Gospel of Christ;" a path by which to pass through the waves of this world's afflictions and temptations, which else would overwhelm us; this may be accounted good-tidings to all to whom this path is opened, even though they *will* not walk in it. The stream of divine grace is flowing, and we are all invited by him who pours it forth, to drink at it; "Ho! EVERY one that thirsteth," said He, "come ye to the waters." "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto eternal life." This may be reckoned joyful tidings to all who *may*, though

all *will* not, seek the gifts of the Spirit. For us, as for the Israelites, a land of promise is prepared; to us a heavenly Canaan is offered on the like condition; that in our journey through the wilderness of this world, we follow the guidance of our great Master,—are led by his Spirit, and are truly his people. Those are not the less honoured and favoured by the offer, even who choose, like the disobedient Israelites, to "harden their hearts, and not to enter into his rest."

But though, as far as *God* is concerned, his Gospel may be regarded as good-tidings to all, inasmuch as (in the language of the Apostle Paul) "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men,"—yet as far as *we* are concerned, we may make this Gospel to ourselves intelligence of horror and dismay. As the Israelites, God's elect (*i. e.* chosen) and highly-favoured people, were, for that very reason, more heavily judged for their rebellions than the "heathen who knew not God;" so among Christians, "the servant who knew his Lord's will," says our Saviour, "and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Thus also

does the Apostle Paul describe the Gospel, as joyful, or as dismal tidings, to each, according as it is received; "to them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and *peace*, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile."

This festival is commonly reckoned a season for thoughtless joy and merriment; it is not unfrequently regarded as the proper occasion for reckless intemperance, or for frivolous dissipation and idle revelry; and God's proclamation of peace with man is commemorated by a more than usual disregard of his will, and forgetfulness of all that relates to Him. This is as if a body of rebels, to whom pardon had been offered by their king, should celebrate this announcement, and testify their grateful joy for the good-tidings, by fresh and more insulting transgressions of his laws, and defiance of his power.

But a Christian who deserves the name will deem it more suitable to this festival to inquire

of his own heart how far the occasion of it is truly a matter of congratulation to himself: how far the Gospel of peace is to him, good-tidings. The event we are this day celebrating,—the birth of Him who came to proclaim "peace on earth," and to "save his people from their sins,"—this event will be remembered by each one of us, thousands of ages hence, and for ever. Reflect then, in time, *how* it will be remembered by yourself in eternity; with what feelings you will look back to this day, and to all your other days spent on earth, when this earth shall have long since come to an end.

You must not, indeed, take for granted that because you are at peace in your own mind, and have a confident belief that you are at peace with God, therefore you are safe; for this may be the case with a man full of spiritual pride, uncharitableness, and other unchristian feelings. But you must compare your life with the pattern our Master has left us, and know yourself by your fruits; even the "fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness;" in short, the bringing of every desire, and thought, and word, and work

into subjection to Christ, and conformity to his example.

If you are striving so to live as becomes the redeemed of Christ, and endeavouring and praying to become daily more conformed to his pattern, and more fit for enjoying his presence in a better world, then may you reckon the Gospel as, indeed, good-tidings to *you;* you may with reason "rejoice in the Lord always;" your joy at this festival will not be thoughtless, worldly, sensual, and profane, but such as the angels themselves can partake of; and you may be assured that they *will* rejoice with you, both now and for ever.

But if in any degree you find yourself differently-minded, reflect seriously how far your gladness may be vain and unfounded; and if your life and your heart, and your mode of celebrating this festival, be the reverse of all this, be assured that the tidings of the angels are, as yet, no good-tidings to you;—that you have as yet no reasonable ground for exultation, but have rather reason to fear that the devil and his angels rejoice over you; and that you may fall under the woe that Jesus denounced, when

He said, "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep!" May it please Him to awaken any of you who may be in such a state, while the strait gate is yet open, from your dream of senseless exultation, and to change it into sorrow *now*, to save you from mourning hereafter for ever; that you may fall down trembling to make the momentous inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" that you may add to the joy felt, as on this day, by the angels, who "rejoice," we are told, "over one sinner that repenteth;" and that "you may know the things that belong unto your PEACE, before they are hid from your eyes!"

SERMON II.

MATT. I. 23.

They shall call his name Emmanuel: which being interpreted is, God with us.

THIS prophecy of Isaiah, which the Evangelist brings forward as having reference to the birth of our blessed Lord,*—the event we this day celebrate—is the more especially remarkable from the circumstance that it was *not* fulfilled in that sense which, to an English reader, the expression would seem naturally to bear. The name given to him was, we know, not Emmanuel, but (by the express direction of the angel) Jesus, signifying Saviour. And yet neither the Evangelist himself, who records the name of

* This discourse was delivered on Christmas-day.

Jesus, and then adduces the prophecy, nor any of the other sacred writers, has thought it necessary to explain this circumstance. None of them notice as seemingly at variance with the words of the prophet, or, in any way, at all remarkable, our Lord's not literally bearing the very name Emmanuel.

In this, as in most other points of difficulty, Scripture will explain itself. You will be at no loss to account for the circumstance I have mentioned, if you will refer to some of those numerous passages both in the Old and New Testament, in which the word "Name" is employed according to the then common usage; not in the precise and literal sense which it now bears among us; but to denote *manifestation of divine power*, or *revelation of divine will*, by a special communication. You will meet with a multitude of expressions in Scripture which would be unintelligible, or very obscurely and imperfectly intelligible, to any one who did not keep this in mind.* In such expressions (and they are exceedingly frequent), as "calling

* See Hinds's History, vol. i. p. 150.

on the Name of the Lord,"—praising, blessing, magnifying, "the Name of the Lord," &c., to an English reader, not familiar with Scripture, the word "*name*" would be likely to appear superfluous. When again we are forbidden in the third commandment to take the Name of the Lord in vain, and are taught in the Lord's Prayer to pray that God's Name may be hallowed, such a reader might be apt to understand this as applying merely to the very Name of God, literally, and to nothing else; though the word certainly ought to be understood as extending to the holy Scriptures—to the Sacraments—and, in short, to every thing connected with the worship of the Lord our God. To such a reader, again, the expression of overthrowing enemies, or performing any other mighty work, "in the Name of the Lord," would be even misunderstood; as it would seem to signify, merely *professing* to act in the Lord's service; whereas it is plain from the context, that these, and other such phrases, denote the performance of the works *through actual divine assistance,*—not only with the *invocation,* but through the actual *display* and manifestation of divine

power. When again our Lord Jesus says of Himself, "I am come in my Father's *name*, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own *name*, him ye will receive;" it is plain He did not mean that the false Christs, whom the Jews that had rejected Jesus, followed, would not, in *our* sense of the phrase, come in his Father's Name; *i. e.* professing and claiming, as He did, to be sent from God. But, by "coming in his Father's Name," He plainly means, coming supported by a *manifestation* of divine power, through which He wrought sensible miracles. "The works," said He, "that I do in my Father's name" (*i. e.* by divine power), "they bear witness of me."* Others would come hereafter in

* "The scriptural expression [referring the signs wrought by the Apostles to Christ] is '*in his name*,' and '*in that name*;' a mode of speaking, which seems to denote an anxiety to avoid conveying the notion of Tritheism, in teaching the doctrine of the Trinity. It reminds the Christian, that He of whom the Scriptures are speaking, was the same God in whose former Name the old revelations had been made, and the miracles of old had been wrought; that it was 'God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' (2 Corinth. v. 19.)

* * * * *

"The origin of this is plainly set forth in Exodus, (iii. 13,) 'And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your

their own "names;" *i. e.* though pretending to be sent from God, yet manifesting no power beyond the natural ability of Man;—requiring to be believed on their own bare assertion, instead of

fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, *What is his name?* what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM That I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you; and God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: *this is my name for ever*, and this is my memorial unto all generations.' God commanded Moses to announce to his people, that He had appeared in a new *name*; but God said moreover to him, that he must caution his people, that He was still the same God of their fathers, &c. In a subsequent interview Moses was reminded of this in these terms, 'I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, *by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah* was I not known unto them.' (Exodus vi. 3.)

"The expression thus adopted to denote a *new manifestation* of the Godhead, naturally enough became an object of scrupulous veneration to the Israelites. They studiously avoided all mention of the Name which denoted God in his new dispensation: a scruple which may be considered as sanctioned by the commandment, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' Through every successive period of their history the same feeling is recorded. It was the *name* of the Lord that dwelt at Jerusalem, in that *name* the pious are said to walk, his *name* it is which is praised, and in his *name* their enemies are to be destroyed."—*Hinds's History*, Note, vol. i. pp. 150, 151. See also *Warburton's* "*Div. Legation.*"

appealing to (what is in Scripture called the "*name* of God") a display of divine interference.

When again the Israelites are enjoined in the Mosaic Law, to offer their sacrifices, not in all places indiscriminately, but in the place which the Lord should "choose, to *set his name* there," the meaning plainly is, that, at the Tabernacle first, and afterwards at Solomon's Temple, the Lord would manifest himself,—would be, what we call, especially present,—hearing prayer, accepting sacrifice, and delivering oracles.*

Hence it is that there is a correspondence between the Lord Jesus Christ and that Temple; which He himself expressly alluded to when He described his death and resurrection, as a destroying and re-building, after three days, of the Temple; viz. says the Apostle John, "the temple of his body." And as the Temple at Jerusalem is spoken of as the place which the Lord should "choose, to cause his *name* to dwell there;" so, of the promised Messiah, it is said (evidently in a corresponding sense), that his "name" should be, "*God with us*;" and again,

* See Hinds's "Three Temples of the One God."

that his "Name should be called (according to Jeremiah) the Lord our righteousness;" and yet again (according to Isaiah), that his Name should "be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;" all which expressions being conformable to the established phraseology of the Jews, were readily understood to mean, that, as in the Temple at Jerusalem, so, in the promised Christ or Messiah, there should be an especial indwelling of the Divine presence and power; that in him should be a manifestation of God's "might" and "wonderful works," and through him proclamation of God's *fatherly* kindness, and an offer of "*peace*" with mankind. Their customary use of the words "name" and "called" conveyed this sense to them.

The only question with *them* was, whether *Jesus of Nazareth* were the person to whom these prophecies applied, and in whom the Lord God had thus manifested Himself. They were all, more or less, startled and revolted ("offended" as the Evangelists express it) at his not coming forward with temporal power and splendour, as they had expected; but (as you may

observe in confirmation of what I have been saying) none of them seem to have been at all in expectation that He would literally, in our sense, bear the "name" of Emmanuel, and to have made it a matter of surprise or objection that He did not.

And you may observe that when the question was debated between the believers and the unbelievers in Jesus, the same kind of language was employed. Our Lord himself bids his disciples go forth after his ascension, and make converts to his religion, "baptizing them" (not *in* the name, as it appears in our translation,* but) "*into* the 'name' of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," which is often spoken of, simply, as "baptizing them into the name of the Lord Jesus;" enlisting them, that is, into his service, and receiving their confession that God had thus manifested or declared Himself in Him. This kind of language was, of course, equally *intelligible* to believers and unbelievers, much as they differed as to the *fact*. We find the chief priests using it when they forbade the

* This mistranslation seems to have been derived from that in the Latin version; "*in nomine*."

Apostles to speak to any man "in this name;" they having just before commanded a lame man to "rise and walk, in the *name* of Jesus of Nazareth;" and having declared before the assembly, that "there is no other *name* given under heaven whereby we must be saved." Now it is plain there could be no miraculous virtue in the sound of the name, but in the divine power and manifestation of God in Jesus.

There seems every reason to suppose that this employment of the word "name" (or "title," as it might more strictly be rendered) arose from the custom of persons assuming, or having applied to them, a title alluding to some remarkable action * or quality; thence, the word "name" came to be used to denote the very performance of that action, or the possession of that quality, which had given rise to the appellation: and, finally, it was thus used even when the appellation was *not* actually borne; as, for instance, "the Lord thy God who is a *jealous* God," and "the Lord whose *name* is *Jealous*," were understood as equivalent expressions.

* Thus among the Romans we find the titles of Africanus, Germanicus, &c.

But whatever may have been the origin of the custom, you will find it very useful towards the right understanding of Scripture to familiarize your mind, by examining various passages, (of which you will find many more than I have cited,) to the *fact*, that the word *is* thus used, and ordinarily used, by the sacred writers, to denote any especial manifestation of God's presence and power, and immediate communication with man, and revelation of his will to us. And you will find such an examination will, if carefully conducted, with the aid of no greater reflection than the plainest Christian, guided by God's Holy Spirit, is equal to, gradually throw light on many important passages, which would otherwise be either very obscure, or liable to be mistaken. It will, for example, throw much light on the true character of that great Person whose coming into the world we this day celebrate.

And on this point I shall proceed to offer a few observations. Let us unite in the prayer which He offered up for us and his other disciples, to the Father, "that we may *know* Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent."

All Christians are agreed that Jesus of Nazareth was, in some way or other, the promised Emmanuel; that in some sense, and in some degree or other, "God was with Him," and was "declared" or manifested in and by Him; that He was called the Christ, Messiah, or Anointed, as being in some especial manner "anointed" (as the Apostle Peter expresses it) "with the Holy Ghost and with power;" He himself having applied to Himself the prophecy, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor." And many intricate and fruitless metaphysical questions have been debated among different sects of Christians, as to the divine nature of our Lord, and the manner of the union between the Deity and a man; the parties engaged in these questions being too often hurried into presumptuous, as well as unprofitable speculations; on points as far beyond the reach of the human intellect as colours to a man born blind; and forgetting that the union of the soul and the body of any one among us, can neither be explained nor comprehended by himself or any other, and appears the more mysterious the more we reflect on it.

The chief practical and intelligible question for Christians to decide, as to this matter, is, simply, whether our Lord Jesus Christ is (supposing it admitted, I mean, that there is but one God) properly an object of *divine worship* or not.

We know that in a certain manner God was with Moses (to whom He said "certainly I will be with thee"), and with the other prophets, who were all called "men of God;" and all of whom, though in various degrees, received immediate communications from Him; and most of them at least (probably all) were endued with a divine power of working sensible miracles: yet none of these claimed or received any divine worship. No one adored God as *manifested in* Moses; and Peter, who had wrought so many miracles, when the Centurion Cornelius seemed disposed so to adore him, forbade him, "saying, stand up; I myself also am a man." Now the question is whether God was with Jesus of Nazareth only as with a most eminent prophet, or in some such manner as authorized and requires us to *worship* God in Christ. Those who deny Christ this worship, and represent Him as only the greatest

among the prophets, charge us with *idolatry*, as paying divine adoration where it is not due.

To this it is sometimes answered, that even supposing us erroneous in our notion of Christ's person, still we ought not to be charged with idolatry; inasmuch as we intend to direct our worship to the one true God, and not to a man, as Man, or to any angel or other created Being. But this answer, though it repels the charge as far as the *first* commandment is concerned, does not clear any one in regard to the *second;* and many of the idolaters among the Israelites might have defended themselves, and most likely did, on the same ground. Those, indeed, who worshipped Baal and the other gods of the heathen, did intend to direct their worship to some different being from Jehovah; but the worshippers of the golden calf in the wilderness, and of those set up in Bethel and Dan long after, and most probably also those who burned incense to the brazen serpent,* intended to worship in these emblems the Lord the God of Israel; as indeed we may judge from the expression used, "These

* See "Errors of Romanism," chap. i.

be thy gods, O Israel, who *brought thee out of the land of Egypt.*" And these two sins, the breach of the first and of the second commandments, are frequently and strongly distinguished in the Old Testament history; as, *e. g.* in the case of Jehu, who is recorded as having destroyed *Baal* out of Israel, yet as "not departing from the sin of Jeroboam, to wit, the *golden calves* in Bethel and in Dan."

In this, and in several other cases that are recorded, there was no breach of the first commandment, but only of the second; viz. by the worship of the true God in some *unauthorized* image, emblem, or representation, in which the worshippers falsely and superstitiously supposed some such divine presence to reside as made it a fit object of adoration. For it should be remembered (and this, though evident on a moment's reflection, is often lost sight of), it should be remembered, I say, that none, even the most brutish idolaters, ever *could* worship a block of wood or stone, *as* mere wood and stone. Whether a man pays divine adoration to an image, or a piece of bread, or a fire, it is plainly implied by the very act of adoration that he

supposes it to be *something more* than a lifeless image, or a piece of bread, or a fire: he must conceive, whether falsely or truly, that some divine (or, at least, spiritual and superhuman) power resides in the image, or is in some manner connected with it. To worship a stone, considering it as merely a stone, is not only impossible, but inconceivable, unmeaning, and self-contradictory. The violation, therefore, of the second commandment *must* consist in attributing, falsely, and without being authorized, some such divine presence to some Being or object to which it does not properly, and by divine appointment, belong.

Hence, the very same act may be idolatrous or not, according as this divine appointment is wanting or not. For instance, when God first revealed Himself to Moses in the wilderness, in the appearance of a flame of fire blazing from the bush, he was commanded to "put off his shoes from his feet" (the customary mark of reverence still in the East), because the place whereon he stood was "holy ground:" and the Lord spake to Moses from this flame, and Moses there "fell on his face and worshipped."

Now if Moses had, either before or afterwards, himself kindled a fire and worshipped before it, as a suitable emblem of the Lord, and as having the same divine presence in it, he would clearly have been guilty of idolatry; an idolatry which was, in fact, long practised, and still is by some of the Persians, and which had its origin probably in the traditions respecting these real manifestations of God. The difference between the worship which Moses paid, and that of the idolatrous fire-worshippers, is a difference as to a matter of *fact;* in the one case the manifestation of the Deity was *real;* in the other, an unauthorized and presumptuous fancy. Moses, no doubt, was aware, as we are, that "God" (as the Evangelist John expresses it) "no man hath seen at any time;" but he considered God as revealing Himself and holding communication through the means of the visible appearance of the supernatural flame. This miraculous flame (or "*glory* of the Lord," as it is often called in Scripture) continued to appear from a cloudy pillar, as a visible guardian and conductor of the Israelites; and from its being the means of communication between the Lord and them, is thence

repeatedly called the Angel (*i. e.* Messenger) of the Lord. *E. g.* Ex. xiv. 19, 20: "The angel of the Lord, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them; and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these." And it is worth observing that the word *Angel* (or Messenger) is seldom if ever applied in the Old Testament (as it is in the New) to ministering Spirits,—*persons* created by the Lord, and employed in his service. In the Old Testament it is almost always applied to some visible appearance in which there was an immediate manifestation of the Lord Himself. So that the expressions "the Lord," and "the Angel of the Lord," are frequently used indiscriminately, to convey the same sense. Of this description, you will find, if you read the passages attentively, was the appearance of the angels to Abraham and to Lot, in Genesis xviii. xix.; and again that of an angel to Balaam, in Numbers xxii; and to Manoah and his wife,

in Judges xiii.; and the same in other places. Accordingly, in the Old Testament, when an angel is mentioned, we generally read of divine worship being offered and *accepted;* in the New Testament, on the contrary, to the angels or ministering spirits recorded as appearing, divine worship either is not offered, or is rejected. "See thou do it not," (says the angel to John, in Rev. xxii.) "for I am thy fellow-servant."

On the other hand, in respect of the part of Scripture we have just been considering, you may observe that when the Lord promises Himself to lead the Israelites through the wilderness into the promised land, He elsewhere explains that He will do so by sending his "Angel," *i. e.* a sensible manifestation of Himself, in which his power shall reside and be displayed—his "name," according to that use of the phrase which I have before adverted to: "Behold, (Ex. xxiii. 20,) I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions: for

my *name* is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey *his* voice, and do all that *I* speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies," &c.

I have dwelt thus earnestly on the scriptural uses of the word *name* as applied to a manifestation of divine power, because the usage of our own language is so different, that an inattentive reader will be very likely, in this point, to miss the true sense of the sacred writers; and because, on the right fixing of that sense, chiefly depends, as it appears to me, the determination of the most important, or at least first, question in religion; viz. *whom we are to worship.* We must learn the nature of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, if at all, from the Scriptures; not from philosophical conjectures and speculations of our own. And the Scriptures will not lead us to the knowledge of evangelical religion, unless they are both carefully and candidly studied. Whoever sets out with a favourite theory of his own, and then searches the Scriptures for confirmations of it, will hardly ever fail to find them. He will be viewing objects through a coloured glass, which will impart its own tint to every thing he looks at. If, again, you fix on some single

detached sentence of the Bible that happens to strike you, and make this the guide of your belief or your conduct, without taking any pains to ascertain its real sense by a careful examination of the rest of Scripture, you may fail of the truth, and fail through your own fault; because you must be well aware that a single sentence picked out from a conversation or a letter of your own, and taken entirely by itself, might convey a very imperfect, or even erroneous, notion of your own sentiments.

And if any one tells you that as the sacred writers addressed themselves to simple unlearned men, therefore you should take the *plain and obvious* sense of what they say, you should consider that this maxim is just, only so long as you keep before you the question, "plain and obvious *to whom?* To *us*, in this country, reading in a translation, and at a distance of near eighteen centuries? or, plain and obvious to the persons whom the Apostles and other sacred writers were actually addressing?"

No one scarcely can doubt that they wrote and spoke so as to be understood readily by those around them. The sense in which *these*

would most naturally understand them, it seems reasonable to suppose must be the true sense. And if in any points the customs and habitual mode of thinking and speaking among the hearers of the Apostles were different from our own, this difference (which the Scriptures themselves will enable an attentive reader to understand) must be taken into account in our interpretation of what is said.

To take an instance from the subject we have been already treating of; when it was prophesied of the promised Messiah, "they shall call his name Emmanuel;" the plain and obvious sense of this passage, *to an English reader*, would lead him to expect that our Lord should actually and literally go by that name; but this certainly was not (and I have already explained *why* it was not) the obvious sense of the passage to the readers of that time and country. And no one accordingly, either of the followers, or the enemies, of our Lord, seems to have felt the smallest surprise that the name of one who professed to be the promised Messiah should be not Emmanuel, but Jesus.

Again, when our Lord distinguishes between

himself and the false Christs who should come after him, by saying that whereas *He* came in his "Father's *name*," *they* would come in their "own *name*;" this would imply, in its obvious sense, *to an English reader*, that while He professed to come from God, the others would make no such profession. But we know that the fact was not so. It has been already explained that what He meant, and was readily understood to mean, by those who heard Him, was, that which actually took place; viz. that the false Christs whom the greater part of the Jewish nation received, did not, though pretending to be sent from God, display the miraculous powers, and perform the works that Jesus did "in his Father's name."

But the Scriptures themselves will, as I have said, serve to explain their own meaning in the most essential points, if studied, under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, with an humble, patient, diligent, and candid mind. And such a mind, even without extensive learning or great ability, will be more enlightened by them than the most learned or the most ingenious, if led away by conceited and presumptuous fancies,

and given up to indolent prejudice, or blinded by spiritual-pride, or the spirit of party.

To apply, then, what has been said to the great question, which, as I have observed, may, I think, be settled by the considerations I have laid before you:

Those who pay divine worship to Christ Jesus, are, as I have said, not necessarily cleared of the charge of sinful idolatry by the mere consideration that they *intend* to direct their worship to the one true God; but they *are* cleared, if the Scriptures *authorize* and enjoin us to *worship God in Christ;* if we are taught that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself;" if we are taught, not merely that "the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him," but that "God giveth not the Spirit *by measure* unto Him," since (as the Apostle expresses it) "in Him dwelleth *all* the *fulness* of the Godhead bodily;" if we are taught, in short, that his *name* being called Emmanuel, "God with us," denotes, according to every fair interpretation, God's having chosen so to "*place his name*" in the man Christ Jesus,—so to dwell in Him, *i. e.* and to manifest or declare Himself in Him, as to be, in Him,

properly worshipped;—if all this be so, then are we, in this worship, obeying the divine will, and not incurring the charge of sinful idolatry.

But why do I say *sinful* idolatry? Is not the very word always so used as to imply a sin? It is so; but if any one should choose, instead of looking to common usage, to turn to the strict etymological sense of the word "idolater," and to ask whether we are or are not "worshippers of an image," we ought without hesitation to answer that we *are*. No one *can* (as I said) address his prayers to a stone *as* a *mere stone*, or a piece of bread, as no more than bread; nor can pay divine adoration to a mere man whom he himself considers as no more than a man: in all cases he cannot but direct his worship to some divine virtue or presence which he supposes (whether with or without good reason) to reside in the object of his worship. To presume to do this, in any case, without the divine appointment, is the sin of idolatry offensive to the "jealous God." But we worship God in his beloved Son, in whom, the Scriptures teach us, "it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell;" "through whom we have access

to the Father;" and through Him alone; for "I" (said He Himself) "am the way, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "Have I been so long with you" (says He again), "and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father: believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?"

We differ, then, from the worshippers of any mere man, whether an impostor, as Mahomet, for instance, or a saint, as Moses or Peter; or of a graven image, or of a fire, or of any thing else that they have set up for themselves,—we differ from them, I say, in this, the essential circumstance, that *their* worship is unauthorized, presumptuous, and vain, while *ours* is divinely appointed; *they* "worship they know not what; *we* know what we worship." But the *kind* of adoration which idolaters pay to their images so far corresponds to the Christian's, to our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might very reasonably and intelligibly describe Him by that term, even if we had not, as we have, the express authority of one of His own Apostles for doing so. Paul, in the

Epistle to the Colossians, distinctly calls Him "the Image of the invisible God:" using in this place the word (εικων), which is commonly employed for an "image." When again, to the Hebrews, He calls Him the "brightness of God's glory" (alluding evidently to the radiant flame by which the Lord had been accustomed to manifest his presence of old), "and the express image of his Person," the word rendered "express image" (χαρακτηρ) denotes a stamp, or impress,—any thing imprinted, as the form of a seal is, on wax.

Of course he could not mean that the visible body of Christ, or any other *visible* thing, could be literally an image or *resemblance* of the *invisible* God. He must have meant, that our Lord's human life and character on earth give us the best representation we are capable of receiving of the divine greatness and goodness;* even as a statue, though it has not real flesh and blood, as a man has, conveys to us a notion of his outward appearance. But did he not also, besides this, mean a great deal more? An image, or picture of any one we are

* See Essay ii. First Series.

acquainted with, may remind us of his person, and may for that reason be cherished with regard; but we should never think of conversing with, or addressing it, or expecting it to speak or act in any way. Nor would the heathen idolaters have said to a graven image, "Deliver me, for thou art my God," if they had not erroneously imagined some spiritual power to reside in it; that the God it represented had (in the Scriptural expression) "caused his name to dwell there." Now Jesus Himself describes Himself (as do his Apostles,) as not only conveying to us a notion of the Father's character, but as possessing the Father's *power*, offices, and attributes, and claiming the *honour* due to the Father: "all power" (said He) "is given unto me, in Heaven and in earth." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should *honour the Son*, even as they honour the Father." Surely, therefore, Paul, in speaking of this "image of the invisible God," must have been understood as of an image *in* which that God was to be adored.

And this will be the more evident if you

consider what sort of notion such expressions would naturally convey to those particular persons whom the Apostle is addressing. They were surrounded by, and familiar with, idolaters; men who were accustomed to worship images, in which resided (as they imagined) some present deity,—some celestial power, which could listen to their prayers. Would not, therefore, one of Paul's converts conclude, from his language, that Christ was the one authorized Image of the true God, appointed to receive that worship which the heathen superstitiously paid to images made with their own hands? Such an interpretation they could not have failed to put on his words; and what is more, *he* must have been sure that they *would* so understand him, unless he took care to put in an express caution against it, and to warn them that Christ was *not* to be an object of worship. *Did* he, then, give any such caution? So far from it, that he takes various occasions to say the direct contrary. For instance, he says (as plainly as he *could* say it, according to that use of the word "name," which has been already explained) that the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ is not only

superior to any other ever made before, but is such as to demand divine worship: "God," says he, "hath given Him a *name* which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."

It is chiefly from this passage, I conceive, that the custom arose of making an outward gesture of reverence when the *name* of Jesus is pronounced. When this external homage to the sound of the word, serves to *remind* us of the inward and real veneration due to the divine manifestation in our Lord, the custom is useful. But it is absurd and hurtful, when (as I fear is often the case) the outward reverence for the Name is made the *substitute* for an inward reverence for the Person of Jesus;—when we imagine that we *obey* the direction of the Apostle by literally bending the body, when the literal *name* of Jesus is uttered. By his *name*, is meant (as has been already fully explained to you,) much more than the mere sound of the word; and by the bending of the knee, is meant (as the Apostle's hearers must have well understood), the religious veneration of the heart,

towards Him who is "one with the Father," and "in whom God was, reconciling the world unto Himself."

The hearers of the Apostles, then, were, by them (it is plain), not merely left, but led, to be, in this sense, worshippers of an image;—the *one* divinely-appointed and authorized Image. Nor did the Apostles merely *teach* them thus to worship God in Christ, but set them the example.

There are, indeed, very few christian prayers expressly recorded in Scripture; but from those few, it should seem that our Lord's disciples understood his injunction to them, to pray to the Father *in his name*, as meaning, that they were to address their *prayers directly to* Christ, and pray to God *in* Him. This, indeed, if you consider what has been said on the use of the word *name*, is what we might naturally have supposed *would* be their interpretation of the command to ask of God in Christ's Name; *i. e.* of God as manifested in Christ for the redemption of the world. And the few instances that *are* recorded, go to confirm this. Keeping in mind that the title of "Lord," or "The Lord," is that which the Christians constantly applied to

Jesus Christ, look at the prayer recorded in the beginning of Acts, where they apply to Him who had in person chosen each of the Apostles, to fill up for Himself the number left deficient by the apostasy of Judas. They do not say, "Our Father, we pray thee for the sake of Jesus Christ to fill up the number of his Apostles," but they apply themselves to Him direct; saying, "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men (καρδιογνωστα), show whether of these two thou hast chosen."

Again, look to the dying prayers of the blessed martyr, Stephen, whose birth-day to immortal life we celebrate to-morrow. His prayers are an evident imitation of those of his crucified Master. Yet he does not use the same invocation, of *Father*, but addresses himself direct to Christ. Our Lord had said, when his enemies were nailing Him to the cross, "*Father*, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and again, when about to expire, "*Father*, into thy hands I commend my Spirit." Stephen, in manifest imitation of Him, says, "*Lord*, lay not this sin to their charge:" and again, "*Lord Jesus*, receive my spirit."

It is plain that these persons, if they designed at all (as they surely did,) to obey the injunction of praying to the Father in Christ's *name*, must have supposed themselves to be conforming to it, by praying immediately to Christ. It would perhaps be too much to assert positively that they prayed usually in this form, and seldom in any other; but it is plain that, according to their views, such *might* have been their usual practice; and, I believe, not above one instance of a departure from it is recorded.* It is remarkable, too, that of the same character is the oldest, or one of the oldest, of all the prayers for general use, that have come down to us composed by an uninspired Christian; that of the celebrated Chrysostom, retained in our Service. It is addressed to Christ Himself, with the

* The only instance, as far as I recollect, recorded of the employment by the Apostles, of any other mode of address to God, is that which occurred after Peter and John had been brought before the Jewish rulers, when they had healed the cripple at the temple gate. The occurrence suggests to the assembly the words of the Psalm—"The rulers took counsel together against the *Lord, and against his Christ*" (or *anointed*): and it appears as if they were thence led to speak of Jesus Christ in the third person in their prayer, on the only recorded occasion in which they do so.

title of "Almighty God," and with an allusion to his promise, to be present in the midst of his disciples, and that they should obtain what they should agree to ask in a common (or joint) supplication, when assembled in his Name.—"Almighty God, who hast given us grace, at this time, with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise, that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name, thou wilt grant their request; fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Do not, then, (I would observe in conclusion,) do not forget that He "through whom we thus have access to the Father" is still with us; and will be, as He has promised, "even unto the end of the world." His bodily presence, indeed, is withdrawn; which, as He declared, is "expedient for us;" since that bodily presence could not be enjoyed by numbers of disciples, at once, and in various places; but He has promised to be with us by his Spirit, wherever, and

whenever, a congregation, even of two or three, "are gathered together in *his name*:" "there," said He, "am I in the midst of you." Draw near to Him, then, in faith, and bow the knees of your heart before Him; remembering that though you see Him not with your eyes, He has promised to "manifest Himself unto every one that will love Him and keep His commandments." "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Shall we now accordingly, my christian brethren, (gathered together as we are in Christ's name,) "agree touching something we shall ask," and which He has promised "shall be given us by the Father, who is in heaven?" But we must ask something that we are *sure* will be suitable for us. For in many cases we know not what is truly for our good; and we cannot suppose He meant to promise us the fulfilment to our own hurt, of prayers we might blindly and ignorantly offer. And hence Chrysostom wisely prays Him *so* to hear his servants' prayers, "as may be *most expedient* for them." Let all of us, then, agree to beg of Him, that we

who are here collected may receive this day with heartfelt devotion, and gratitude, and love, the blessed symbols of his body and blood, offered up for us; and that we may so partake not only of those outward and visible signs, but of the inward spiritual grace signified by them,—even the "Spirit of Christ," without which "we are none of his;"—that we may be true branches of Him "the true vine," and "glorify the Father, by bringing forth much fruit;"—and especially that we may not be led into that most unchristian profanation of this holy festival which is so common; by making it a season devoted to thoughtless revelry, dissipation, and intemperance; but may become daily more like our Master in holiness of heart and life, and more fit for dwelling with Him hereafter in the place which He has prepared for us.

And let all of us unite in offering to Him who *has redeemed*, and who is *now ready to govern* and support us, and who will one day *judge* us, the adoration contained in one of the very earliest of the christian hymns: "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Thou

sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father. We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge; we *therefore* pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting. O Lord, save thy people, and bless thine heritage; govern them, and lift them up for ever. Day by day we magnify thee; and we *worship thy Name*, ever, world without end."

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God,—unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,—unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

SERMON III.

1 KINGS VIII. 10, 11.

It came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the House of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the Glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord.

THE portion of sacred history from which these words are taken, being an account of the dedication by Solomon of the first temple to Jehovah, may at the first glance appear to some of you not to have so close a connexion as in fact it has with the occasion we this day* celebrate. But it may be very profitable, — and most especially to those of you who may *not*

* Whitsunday.

have been accustomed to take such a view of the subject, — to bestow some attention on the connexion which really does exist between the two events in question; viz. the consecration of Solomon's Temple, and that outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, which was, in truth, the consecration of the last and greatest — the Christian Temple, in which Jehovah has ever since been pleased to dwell.

In condescension to the gross, feeble, and puerile understanding of a half-barbarian people, such as the Israelites when they came out of Egypt, and also when the kings reigned over them, the Lord thought good to manifest Himself to them as the tutelar deity of their nation — the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and as a *local* deity, peculiarly dwelling, — *i. e.* displaying his power and accepting their worship, — in a particular place; thence called the place which the Lord "chose, to set his *name* there," — to "cause his *name* to dwell there;" *name* being the ordinary expression in Scripture for especial presence, manifestation of power, and display of attributes. All of course who had even but a

moderate portion of intelligence, would perceive that the expression of God's *dwelling* in the Temple or Tabernacle, was but an accommodation to human ideas; and that what was really meant, was, his having appointed that place as the seat of their common worship of Him: "Will God, indeed," says Solomon, (in 1 Kings viii.) "dwell on earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built? yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, that thine eyes may be open towards this house night and day, even towards the place of which thou hast said, my Name shall be there; that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servants shall make toward this place."

And under such a dispensation the Israelites had, as you know, lived, long before the building of Solomon's Temple; only with the difference that the Ark of the Covenant (*i. e.* the sacred chest or ark containing the tables of the Ten Commandments, which were the testimony of God's Covenant with his people,) this had hitherto been kept not in a building of stone,

but in a tabernacle, or tent, that was removed occasionally from place to place.

This, however, was a difference very unimportant in comparison of the great change which God's providence contemplated, viz. from a dispensation of outward visible emblems, and "carnal ordinances," (as the Apostle calls them,) to one of a more spiritual and exalted character, suitable to more enlightened worshippers,—from the types and shadows of the Mosaic Law, and of all that pertained to it, to the realities signified by them,—and from a literal building of stone in a particular spot, to a temple co-extensive and identical with the worshippers themselves,—the temple consisting of the very Christian people themselves, who (as the Apostles express it,) "as lively" (*i. e.* living) "stones, are builded up" (or edified) "into a holy Temple to the Lord."

In anticipation—in close anticipation—of this, it was, that our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father: God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him

must worship Him in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Truth, He meant, not, of course, as opposed to falsehood;—for the Mosaic religion was *true*;—but truth in the sense of *reality*, as opposed to figurative representations and emblems; the Law being only "the shadow of good things to come,"—of which the gospel was the substance. And in this sense it is that it was said, "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and *truth* came by Jesus Christ."

To prepare the way for this great transition, God, who had been pleased to manifest Himself in a peculiar manner in the Temple at Jerusalem,—to "cause his *name* to dwell there,"—deigned afterwards to manifest Himself in a second Temple, which was, the Lord Jesus; "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "The Word," we are told, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" dwelt as in a *Tent or Tabernacle*, according to the original; [ἐσκήνωσεν] denoting that this was to be a temporary manifestation, and of short duration:—"and we beheld his *glory*, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." Our Lord accordingly speaks of,

or alludes to Himself, as the Temple, in several passages which cannot be otherwise understood, besides that remarkably distinct one, in which He says, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will build it up: but He spake of the Temple of his body."

But a third and final manifestation of God was yet to come. Jesus was *singly* and individually the Temple: and Christians are so *collectively*.* They are thence called,—all of

* See Hinds's "Three Temples of the One God," in which work the reader will find, fully developed, the ideas here briefly sketched out. That they appear (as I have found to be the case) strange and startling to many, even of the more intelligent Christian readers, is a circumstance indicative of the mode in which theological knowledge is too commonly obtained; viz. from uninspired writers, who *interweave*, indeed, in their works, much of Scripture, but make this rather a *commentary on their systems*, than the basis and substratum on which they are to comment. They are apt to make (if I may employ a homely metaphor) a human system—the *Warp* instead of the *Woof;* whereas the proper course would be to reverse that procedure,—to take Scripture as the Warp, and interweave their own remarks, explanations, and applications.

Now all those views, which are connected with the scripture-use of the word (οἰκοδομή) "edification," being slightly, if at all, noticed in most theological works, are thence apt to seem strange and fanciful to the Christian reader, though the sacred writers introduce and refer to them perpetually.

them together,—"the Body of Christ," by virtue of his Spirit residing in them. "Know ye not," says the Apostle Paul, "that ye are the Temple of the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in you?" And it is remarkable that in the multitude of passages in which expressions of this kind occur, the scripture-writers are careful never to call Christians the Temples, but, "the Temple of the Holy Ghost." Individual Christians are called *stones* of the Temple. "Ye, as lively" (that is, living) "stones, are builded up into a holy Temple." And so familiar was their use of this kind of expression, that the words "edify" and "edification," which originally and literally relate to real building, have come, in our language, to be so constantly applied, and so confined, to Christian instruction and improvement, that unfortunately their *primary* and literal sense has been generally forgotten; and thus the important lesson which the use of so remarkable a metaphor is calculated to convey, is, to most Christians, utterly lost.

The circumstance, however, to which, on this occasion, I am directing your more especial attention, is the mode of outwardly consecrating

or dedicating each successive Temple, and thus marking, by such an external sign as should furnish a sensible miraculous evidence, the indwelling of the divine Spirit.

We read in the passage originally placed before you, that the "Glory of the Lord filled the House:" and in the corresponding portion of the second Book of Chronicles (ch. vii.) we are told that "when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifices, and the Glory of the Lord filled the House."

Now it is important to observe, that this is not recorded as a thing unexpected, and occurring then for the first time. Indeed, all those for whose use these books were written must have been accustomed long since to consider the *Shechinah*, or "Glory of the Lord," *i.e.* the appearance of a supernatural *flame* (usually accompanied by a column of cloud), as the established sign of the especial Divine *presence*; viz. of God's design to communicate his will, or manifest his power. The appearance of this, the authorized and established symbol, is not, indeed, distinctly stated on every occasion where

we have every reason to conclude that it did appear; and this is precisely *because* it was so fully understood and known that this *was* the notification of the Divine presence. But, besides,—what I have no doubt is the first recorded instance,—the appearance of the "flaming sword" in the garden of Eden,—we find mention (Gen. xv. 17,) of the supernatural flame which appeared to Abraham on the occasion of the Lord's covenant made with him; and again, long after, in the burning bush, in the wilderness of Sinai, from which Moses received his first commission from the God of Israel; and again, more especially, on the occasion of the delivery of the Law from that same Mount Sinai, which took place on the very day afterwards celebrated in commemoration of that event, as the "Feast of Weeks, or Feast of Pentecost;" the very day we are now commemorating, as having been selected, with a very intelligible design, for the opening of that greater and final dispensation, of which the Mosaic Law was the figure and preparation.

Of this, the last, and *spiritual* dispensation, it is that the Prophet Jeremiah speaks (the

Apostle applying his prediction accordingly), when he says that the Lord will "make a new covenant with his People, and put his Laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts;" not, as before, on visible tables of stone. But the external sign—the established indication, and proof, of the reality of the Divine presence, was, on both these occasions, as well as on that of the solemn dedication of the Temple at Jerusalem, the very same; viz. the supernatural flame, known as the Shechinah, or "glory of the Lord." On the delivery of the Law there were (Exod. xix. 16,) "thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the Mount,—and Mount Sinai was all together on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire:" at the dedication of the first Temple "the Glory of the Lord filled the House;" and on the occasion of that which was, in fact, the last, and greatest, and spiritual Temple, a preternatural sound, accompanied by fiery tongues, announced, according to the established usage of the symbol, the special manifestation of Jehovah.*

* "This *glory* is attributed to whatever, from time to time, was the appointed residence of the Godhead. As this

The intermediate and transition stage (as I have already observed) between the first and the

residence was chiefly manifested by the symbol of light, the word glory expressed the light also.

" When Moses desired to have a manifestation of the Lord, his request was, ' I beseech thee, shew me thy glory,' (Exod. xxxiii. 18.) In like manner, it is said that ' the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle,' (Exod. xl. 34,) and ' the house of the Lord,' meaning the light from the cherubim.

" Accordingly, when Isaiah prophesied of the manifestation of God in Christ, he says, ' *the glory of the Lord* shall be revealed,' (Isaiah xl. 5.) And St. John, alluding to the prophet's vision, ' these things spake Esaias, when he saw His *glory*,' (John xii. 41;) and again, ' The Word was made flesh, and dwelt (or tabernacled) amongst us, and we beheld His *glory*, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,' John i. 14.

" So, too, when Christ speaks of his Church, as the future residence of the Godhead in the person of the Holy Spirit, he expresses himself in allusions to this symbol: although that symbol was no longer to be given, to a people destined to ' walk by faith, and not *by sight*.' His Apostles continued to adopt the same language concerning the Church. St. Peter writes, ' The Spirit of *glory* and of God resteth upon you,' (1 Pet. iv. 14.) St. Paul speaks of ' Christ's glorious Church;' and, in his comparison between the Mosaic and Christian dispensation, the Divine presence in each is expressed in the same figurative language. ' If the ministration of death written and engraven on stones was *glorious*, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit

last of these dispensations,—the second Temple, which was the bodily person of our Lord Jesus Christ, may be said to have been dedicated, and its sanctity proclaimed, to the *senses* of the beholders, by an external sign, which, there can be no doubt, was the very same as in the other instances; viz. a supernatural sound, the voice from Heaven designating Him as the Son of God, and a supernatural flame descending and settling on Him. This last is, indeed, not mentioned in those very terms; but the narratives can leave no doubt on the mind of a reader well versed in the rest of Scripture, that the appearance was what I have stated, and that the sacred writers intended to be so understood. For we are told, you should recollect, that John the Baptist had not known (as he

be rather *glorious?*' And, so continuing and explaining the image, he at length proceeds to say that we, the Church of Christ, are not only, as were the Jews, *spectators of the glory*, but its abode and resting place, as it were. '*But we all* with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed into the same image from glory to glory*,' [*i. e.* with a continued increase of glory,] '*even as by the Spirit of the Lord*.' (2 Corinthians iii. 7—18.)"—*Hinds's History*, vol. i. pp. 331, 332, Note.

expressly declares,) the person whom he was baptizing to be the Christ, but had been forewarned of the sign that was to mark Him out. "I knew Him not:" but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit of God descending and abiding on Him, the same is He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Now the Spirit of God, we know, cannot be literally an object of sight; but the sign of his presence, which John the Baptist was told he should see, must have been the *known* and established symbol of a supernatural flame, which alone he could have recognized and understood.*

A notion has found its way into the mind of

* "God has been *omnipresent* from the beginning, and cannot be supposed at any time to be more in one place than in another. Yet it has pleased him from time to time to 'lift up an ensign,' to which men might come to ask for communication of His will, and to be made sensible of His presence. Such was the Shechinah granted to the Israelites, from between the Cherubim, where God is accordingly said to have *dwelt*. With this flame, the voice or other vehicle of communication was so connected, that the priest was obliged to come to the former, in order to avail himself of the latter. The flame was the *sign*; and besides this, there was the voice or

many persons, partly from an ambiguous expression of our translators, that the "bodily form" in which this appeared was that of a dove; because the expression in the English version will bear the sense of its *resembling* a dove; but this is not implied in the original, which only says that it appeared *descending like* a dove,—in the *same manner*, *i. e.* as a dove with a gentle hovering motion alights on any thing; the expression distinguishing the appearance from that of a sudden *flash* of light. But whatever may have been its

other channel of revelation. It afterwards pleased the Most High to set up an ensign for all the world to resort unto, 'even for the nations afar.' This ensign was, the Human-nature of our blessed Lord. To Him, all were now to come who desired to receive the divine communications. His words and symbolical miracles, and other acts, formed the vehicle of that communication—as much so, and in like manner, as the voice which gave the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, or which spoke at different times to Adam, to the Patriarchs, to the Prophets, and others His servants of old. Hence it is written, that 'the *Word* was made flesh and dwelt among us,' and that 'men beheld His *glory*,' in allusion to the analogy between Him and the Shechinah. Hence, too, the occasional radiant appearances which could not fail to have suggested to Jewish witnesses the symbol of divine manifestation."—*Hinds's History*, vol. i. pp. 296—298.

form, the appearance must have been that of a *flame*, because no other could have been recognized by John as the sign of God's Spirit.

Jesus afterwards fulfilled (as on this day) the promise then made, of baptizing his disciples with the "Holy Spirit and with fire;"—*i. e.* (according to the Hebrew mode of expression) with the Holy Spirit, through the outward symbol of fire; which promise He Himself repeated just before His ascension,—"Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." And on that occasion we find, of course, a like appearance recorded; with this remarkable and important circumstance mentioned, that it was not one mass of flame, but distributed among them; the appearance of a distinct flame settling on each of them.* This, which is more clearly pointed out in the original, is imperfectly expressed in our translation;

* In several of the Eastern languages the word denoting a "flame," is, I understand, nearly the same as that for a "tongue;" evidently from a resemblance in the form, and also in the kind of motion of each; which last is the origin of the expression of a "*lambent* (*i. e.* licking) flame."

which, admirably exact as it is in most places, is decidedly incorrect in the use of the word "*cloven*." It should have been, "distributed," or "divided among them." Any scholar, by consulting the original, will see at once, I think, that the words will bear no other sense than that which I have given.*

Now this distinct record of the particular mode in which the sacred symbol of the Divine presence,—the Shechinah, or Glory of the Lord,—fell on the disciples, may serve to remind us (as probably it was intended to do) of that which I have just above remarked, that while Jesus was Himself, singly, the Temple of Jehovah, his disciples are so, not singly, but all of them

* He may refer, however, for further illustration, to the passage, in the Evangelists, relative to the soldiers at the crucifixion dividing or *distributing* among themselves our Lord's garments, and objecting to *rend* his coat. You will there see the different words applied respectively to any thing that is *distributed*, so as to assign a portion to each person; and again, to any thing that is rent, torn, or *cloven* asunder. But even if the word διαμερίζω could be used (which, I think, it never is) to express "cleaving," still the *tense* employed would not have been what it is, had that meaning been designed. It would have been, not, as it is, διαμερίζόμεναι, but διαμεμερίσμεναι. That sense, however, would, in fact, have been expressed by neither; but by διασχίσμεναι.

together. "In Him," says the Apostle, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;"—"it hath pleased the Father that in Him should *all* fulness dwell;" and again, "God giveth not the Spirit *by measure* unto Him." But the time came when this second and intermediate Temple was to be removed from this earth; because it was necessary for the universality of Christ's religion, that believers of all parts of the world should have access alike, without performing a pilgrimage to Judea or to any other spot.* It was "*expedient* for them that He should go away, that the Comforter might come unto them, and abide with them for ever. It was not to be a new Master,—a different Being,—that they were to look for: "I go away," says He, "and *come again* unto you." Nor does this promise allude to his *temporary* abode with them on earth after his resurrection: for, "I will see you again," says He, "and your joy shall be full, and your *joy no man taketh from you.*" And this was, as He said, "expedient for them," *i. e.* for the Christian

* See Hinds's "Three Temples."

world,—because by his Spirit He would be present in every place alike, with his faithful people: "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them."

Such, then, according to our Scriptures, was, and is, the Temple—and such was the consecration or dedication of that Temple—of which all Christians, collectively, were, and are, the "living stones, built up a spiritual house," in which the Lord dwells by his Spirit.

Are these things so, my Christian friends? or is it all a delusion? Were the early disciples weak fanatics, deceived by an accidental earthquake, and a flash of lightning? And did this delusion enable them to speak to all nations in the respective languages of each, and to heal the sick, and raise the dead, and display such other supernatural powers as overthrew,—and as alone *could* have overthrown,—the established religions of the world, and brought men of all ranks and of all nations to disown the gods of their ancestors, and to adore a Jewish peasant who had been cut off by the most ignominious death?

But if the Scripture accounts *are* true (and I know not how we can receive any portion of them without admitting all), how is it that Christians think so little, and feel so coldly,—at least, except on a few stated and solemn occasions,—respecting truths so overpoweringly awful, and so immeasurably important? We are accustomed to hear and repeat commonly in our Liturgy the words of the Apostle, referring to these truths, when we pray that the "*fellowship* of the Holy Ghost may be with us all evermore;" yet often, I fear, almost without ever thinking what is meant by that "fellowship,—communion,—or joint partaking" of the Holy Ghost; which is what I have now been speaking of. Ask yourself, I entreat you, each one that hears me, what is your real belief, and what your sentiments,—I mean your habitual and ordinary sentiments on this subject. Either what are called our sacred books are a series of "cunningly-devised fables," or Jesus Christ is, at this moment, by his Spirit, present in the midst of us, and you are a portion of the temple in which He dwells; even the Temple of God, which "if any man defile," (says the Apostle,)

"him will God destroy;" and you will one day become, whether you will or no, a witness, together with the Apostles, of the resurrection of Jesus: for you will "see Him as He is," when you stand before his judgment-seat, to give an account of the use you have made of the great privilege of Christians in having the Spirit of Christ residing in them: you will give an account of what sort of dwelling you have provided for such a guest.

Do you habitually feel all this, and act on that feeling in the way that you think a man reasonably *should* act on such a persuasion? Or is it, that all this is but feebly impressed on your heart, from your not having the aid of your bodily senses? because the visible Shechinah,—the Glory of the supernatural flame, is not before your eyes? If, then, it be that the want of this sensible attestation,—this evidence of sight,—has left you in *disbelief*, or in doubt, of the fact,—if you are not one of those to whom the blessing pronounced by Jesus will apply—"Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed,"—this is a case into which I will not now enter, any further than to remind

you that the evidence on so important a question should be earnestly and dispassionately inquired into. It is no matter of mere curious speculation, for the amusement of one's leisure hours, but is a question of much more than life and death; and it is a question in the investigation of which no time is to be lost. Very soon you will know the truth to a certainty, if there *be* any truth in Christianity: but the knowledge will then come too late to be of practical benefit, because it will come after this our time of trial on earth shall have closed.

But if you do believe what the Scriptures tell us, and yet feel, in the ordinary course of your life, but slightly impressed with it, for want of the excitement of a visible display of supernatural fire, such as appeared to the Apostles, recollect that this was not in reality the manifestation of the invisible God Himself, but only of the *emblem* which furnished the necessary *evidence* to them, of his inward agency upon them. It was not, itself, his presence, but the *proof* of a revelation from Him; without which proof they could have had no just ground for believing that it *was* a revelation. And if *you* also believe, and

believe on good grounds, you have attained the very end for which the miraculous appearance to them was the necessary means. Nay, and the miracles they themselves wrought, — the supernatural powers with which they were endued (as on this day), were not that sanctifying residence of the Comforter in the hearts of his people, that was promised by Jesus before his departure. They were only the *evidence* of this; and an evidence not more to those who *possessed* such supernatural powers, than to those who should "believe through their word." They were not necessarily the better and holier men for partaking of any supernatural gifts. We read, indeed, in the Apostolic Epistles, of many of those who had partaken of these gifts (as all those Christians, without exception, appear to have done whom any of the Apostles visited), who abused their gifts as unworthily as many men now do the natural gifts of God's providence. But the genuine fruits of the Spirit—the purifying, and supporting, and guiding influences of Him who has promised to "come unto them that love Him, and to make His abode with them,"— these *always* were *invisible*, and to be known

only by their intrinsic character. This is the *end;* the miraculous powers were the *means:* the supernatural display was the *foundation* of the Christian faith; the object of faith—of the practical "faith which worketh by love;"—is, that sanctifying residence of God's Spirit within us, which is promised to *all* Christians, of every age and country.

Do not, then, demand or expect supernatural manifestations *now;* unless, indeed, you think that they are necessary to be continually repeated by way of *proof* of the truth of Christianity;—that no one *can* have sufficient reason for believing any of the things he has not *seen;* —or that the Christian revelation is not one of the things that has such a sufficient reason: but do not, if you accept the Gospel, look for a repetition of those miraculous gifts which were never meant for any thing more than the introductory establishment of it; never, for the actual and permanent indwelling of the Spirit in the Christian Temple, but for the outward sign of its dedication; nor suppose that God has forsaken his people because these miracles are not renewed.

Whether the trial of *our* faith, in believing what our *senses* have not witnessed, or that of the Apostles, renouncing, as they did, in the cause, friends, country, ease, credit, comfort, worldly advantage, and life itself;—and (what is *much more*) renouncing long-cherished and deep-rooted prejudices,—whether, I say, the trial of our faith, or of theirs, be the harder, is not a practical question for us. Our own trial is what concerns *us;* because it is for our own conduct under that, that we shall be judged. It is for us to make up our minds, not to perform once or twice in our lives a toilsome pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or Rome, or Mecca, and, for that occasion, to put an especial restraint on our conduct, and wind up our hearts to the highest pitch of devotion and reverent fear; but, to feel daily, that we have not to go to God, but that God is come to us; to remember,—not occasionally, but habitually and practically, that God is mysteriously among us,—within us, ever speaking to our hearts by his Spirit, and secretly mingling its operations with our own government of our will and affections; that, do what we may, whether good or evil, we are doing it

with Him, and either going along with Him, or else resisting Him; that in every act, and word, and thought, we are either "led by the Spirit of Christ," or else "grieving that Spirit."*

To live under the habitual sense of this, is what we are required to do, and enabled to do, if the Christian Scriptures are indeed true, and if they indeed teach us that we, the Christian People, are the Spiritual Temple of the Holy Ghost.

Strive, therefore, earnestly, and not occasionally, but constantly, to impress this on your hearts; and employ diligently all the means within your reach, to keep the eyes of your mind open to that heavenly Glory dwelling among us, which is no longer forced on our notice through the bodily senses.

And among other means, approach, habitually, to the Lord's Table, to celebrate the feast which is emphatically called the Christian *Communion;—i. e.* the *common participation*,—the joint enjoyment—of the spiritual benefits to

* Hinds's "Three Temples."

which Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself, has called us to be partakers.

May He, who is now, and ever, present, according to his promise, among those assembled in his Name, grant you, in partaking of these sacred emblems of his body and blood, to partake of his Spirit, and to be united in the fellowship of love and peace with Him and with each other!

"Now to Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, the only wise God, be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages. Amen."

SERMON IV.

EXODUS XXIX. 44.

I will sanctify the Tabernacle of the Congregation, and the Altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his Sons, to minister to me in the Priest's office.

THERE is much and very important instruction to be gained from a careful examination of some of those parts of Scripture which, at first sight, may appear to some persons to be wholly unconnected with the religion of the Gospel; and which, to others again, who study the Bible with veneration indeed, but without judgment and caution, are particularly apt to convey *erroneous* notions. An attentive examination of passages of this kind may serve not only to fix valuable truths on the mind, but at the same

time to remove prevailing and dangerous mistakes.

Of such a character may be regarded all the passages in Scripture relating to the Tabernacle (*i. e.* Tent), and the Temple which succeeded to it—the Altars and Sacrifices belonging to that Temple, and the institution and ministration of the Jewish Priesthood. You are, of course, well aware how numerous these passages are, especially in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus, and how exact and minute are the directions given respecting the construction of the Tabernacle and Altar, and the consecration and ministerial offices of the Priests. And such passages are, perhaps, deserving of even the closer attention on an occasion such as the present,* from the very circumstance of their being likely to suggest, in reference to that occasion, a false notion concerning the analogy between the two dispensations.

A superficial and unthinking reader, (which description will embrace, besides many believers, most of those who reject Christianity,—

* The consecration of a church.

and all of that more numerous class who are indifferent about it)—such a one, observing that in all the religions he is acquainted with, or has heard of, there are sacred buildings, often called *Temples* or Houses of God, and also religious *Ministers*, whom he has been accustomed to hear indiscriminately called *Priests*, concludes, naturally enough, that all these hold nearly corresponding places in each religion. And another, who reverently, and in firm faith, but without sufficiently vigilant attention and sound judgment, studies the Scriptures, is even the more confirmed in such a view, from his supposing (and certainly with good reason) that the Jewish Church (or "Congregation," as our translators have called it in the Old Testament) is the parent and forerunner of the Christian Church, (both bearing in the Greek the common appellation of Ecclesia);—that Christianity is a second part of the same divine scheme, of which the Levitical law is the first;—and that the two systems, in some way, answer to each other in almost every point;—while, at the same time, he observes that both have places of worship, and also *Ministers* of religion

(appointed in conformity with divine directions), to each class of which Ministers, the name of *Priest* is in our language applied.*

And, indeed, whether we regard Christianity as a really divine revelation, or as a series of "cunningly devised fables," in either case, we might expect to find, considering that it was introduced by the Jews, a close correspondence between the Mosaic system of Religion, and Christianity. And this accordingly we do find. We find Baptism answering to Circumcision,—the Feast of the Lord's Supper, to the Feast of the Passover;—and (many would be disposed to add) Christian places of worship answering to the Tabernacle or the Temple,—an Altar, in each, and Christian Ministers of different Orders, corresponding to the different Orders of Priests and Levites under the old dispensation. On a closer inspection, however, we find, that with respect to these last two points, the analogy does *not* hold good in the manner supposed; and that, though the correspondence between the two systems is not less real or less exact

* See Sermon on the Christian Priesthood, appended to the the third edition of the Bampton Lectures.

than at first glance it appears, but even *more* so, yet the nature of that correspondence is not such as, from a cursory survey, some might be led to imagine; and that the Christian Ministry does *not* answer to the Jewish Priesthood, nor a Christian place of worship to the Temple.

But before we consider what is, in these respects, the actual character of the Christian Religion, it is worth while first to observe what we might reasonably have *expected* to find in it, supposing it to be a human device; introduced, as it was, by persons brought up under the Mosaic Law. Whether Jesus and his followers were impostors, or enthusiasts, we may be sure they would have conformed, in the one case, to their own prejudices,—in the other, to those of their hearers,—by instituting a Temple, an Altar, a Sacrifice, and a Priesthood, as nearly as possible in compliance with the ideas in which they and their intended converts had been brought up. And if, in any point, they departed from the model of the *Jewish* Religion, it must have been so as to agree more closely with the notions of the *Gentiles* whom they designed to convert. But the Gentiles, no less than the

Jews, had also their Altars, — for the most part, their Temples, — and universally, their Priests, answering in title and in character to those.

It should seem, indeed, as if the very conception of a Religion having *no* order of men officiating as Priests, to offer propitiatory Sacrifices, and act as mediators and intercessors for the people,—no Temple or Altar for offering any such sacrifices at all,—could never have even entered their minds; much less have been for one moment entertained by them, as what should or could be realized.

If, then, we find men so circumstanced, actually introducing a Religion without any such building as a Temple,—without Altars and Sacrifices, and without any Priest on earth—what is the inference to be drawn? Evidently that the religion is, in truth, of divine origin. It is not necessary, in order to draw this conclusion, that we should first be able to perceive the *wisdom* of the appointment,—to understand, or even inquire into, the *reasons* for this peculiar character of Christianity. It is sufficient (as far as the question of *evidence* is concerned) if

we do but perceive that it *is* a peculiar character — if we do but acknowledge that what could *not* have been of *human* origin must have been of Divine. If men of that age and country introduced a religion without any literal Temple, any Sacrifices, any Priesthood on earth, they proceeded in a manner precisely opposite to that which every *human* motive we can possibly imagine would have suggested, supposing them either enthusiasts, or impostors, or a mixture of the two. That they must, therefore, have acted under *superhuman* guidance, we are driven to admit, whether we can perceive, or not, any superhuman *wisdom* in the religion they taught.

And that such *is* the real state of the case,—that the first promulgators of Christianity did not appoint any place answering to the Tabernacle, or to the Temple at Jerusalem, and did not establish any office corresponding to that of the Priests of the old dispensation—must be evident to any man of unbiassed mind, when once his attention is called to the question. For (to begin with the Christian Ministers appointed by them) they were familiar with the title and office (both among Jews and Heathen) of

Hiereus, which is invariably rendered by our translators, Priest; though the English word Priest (it is remarkable) is a derivative, only slightly altered, from the Presbyter (Presbuteros) of the New Testament. Yet this word Presbuteros is always in our Bible-translation rendered by "Elder;" though in the Rubric of the *Prayer-book*, Priest is used instead of Elder. Now if the Apostles had designed to institute any order of men corresponding in office with the Hiereus—the Jewish and Heathen Priest, it is absolutely incredible that they should not have employed the same appellation. That they never did this, is, therefore, a proof that they never designed to execute themselves, or to delegate to others, any such office.

And this is the more remarkable, inasmuch as they did represent the Gospel scheme as having something that does answer to the Jewish Priest. The title is repeatedly and exclusively bestowed on Christ Himself, as alone exercising, under the Christian Dispensation, the office of offering an atoning sacrifice,—of being the one Mediator and Intercessor between man, and God:—as being prefigured by the Priests of the

Levitical Law, and as having entered, once for all, into the holiest place, to make with his own blood eternal satisfaction for us. Whenever the title of Priest is applied to any of Christ's followers, it is applied (which is a circumstance well worthy of remark) not to any particular order of Christians, but to *all* Christians. They are all without exception called, figuratively, Kings and Priests; but they are (as Christians) Kings without subjects, and Priests without a people; in reference merely to the exalted state of glory to which they are called, and to their oblation of *themselves*,—their souls and bodies,—to the service of God. We are called on to present ourselves as a lively (*i. e. living*) sacrifice, in contradistinction to the victims *slain* at the Altar; and as "a reasonable (*i. e. rational*) service" or sacrifice, as contrasted with the *brute beasts* offered under the old dispensation. This language of the Apostle is copied in that of one of our prayers after the Communion: "Here we offer unto Thee *ourselves*, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice." But the true and proper Priest, under the Gospel Dispensation, is the "one

Mediator between God and Man, the man Christ Jesus," who is the propitiation for our sins.

And yet this was not from any contempt on the part of the Apostles for regularity of institutions,—from any neglect of appointing men to particular offices. On the contrary, we find them ordaining "Elders in every city;" appointing various Orders of Ministers, who were afterwards distinguished from each other by those titles (which, at first, were employed indiscriminately) of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons. We read, in later times, of Catechists,—of female ministers bearing the title of "Widows,"—and many others now altogether obsolete; but no Order of Priests, in the sense of Hiereus, answering to the sacrificing Priests of the Jewish and of the Pagan Religions. And the same observations will apply to the Temple. The term was familiar to the New Testament writers; but it is never once applied by them to a Christian place of worship; always to the worshippers themselves, collectively;—to the Christian congregation: as, for instance, "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you?' "Your

body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost." "Ye, as lively (*i. e.* living) stones are builded together into an holy Temple."

All this is indeed perfectly intelligible to any one who understands the character of our religion. It is perfectly consistent with the Gospel scheme; but it is utterly at variance with the notions which would naturally have occurred to the unassisted mind of man.

A further proof of this, if further could be needed, is furnished by the changes which were introduced in after-ages. The very institution, which Christianity in its pure state had abrogated, was grafted into it, as it became corrupted with human devices. An order of Priests, in the ancient sense, offering pretended Sacrifices, on a pretended Altar, in behalf of the People, was introduced into the Christian scheme; in such utter contradiction both to the spirit and the very letter of it, that they were driven to declare the bread and wine of the Eucharist miraculously changed into literal flesh and blood, offered up, day by day, repeatedly: although the founders of our religion had not only proclaimed the perfection of the

one oblation of our Lord, by Himself, but had even proved the imperfection of the Levitical Sacrifices, from the very circumstance of their being repeated "year by year continually;" inasmuch as "they would have *ceased*," (says the Apostle) "to be offered," if, like the Sacrifice of Christ, "once for all," they could have "made the comers thereunto perfect." Now if, when the religion had actually been established without a literal Temple and Altar,—without Sacrifice,—without Priest on earth, all these were introduced into it, in opposition to its manifest character, through the strong craving (if I may so speak) of the natural man after these things, how much more might we expect,—with what complete certainty,—that men brought up *Jews*, and having never seen or heard of any religion, true or false, without Temples, Altars, and Priests, would have instituted, had they been left to themselves, a Temple or several Temples, and an Order of Sacrificing Priests in their new religion. And how certain, that since they carefully abstained from this, and provided against it in the terms they employed,—how certain that

they were *not* left to themselves, but proceeded under the guidance of a divine director!

If, then, we were even unable to perceive in the Institutions of the Christian Religion any mark of *Divine* wisdom, still it would not be the less clear that they could not have been framed by *human* wisdom;—that the Religion, in short, is not such as *could* have been devised by Man. But, in truth, we *may* learn by a careful study, and comparison together, of several parts of Scripture, what was, in part at least, the Lord's all-wise design in making that important change, from the Mosaic Institutions to the Gospel.

The religion of the Mosaic Law was intended for a single nation. And as it was particularly important to impress on the minds of a barbarian and superstitious people, surrounded by Pagans,—worshippers of many Gods,—the *Unity* of Him whom, *alone*, *they* were to worship, (which doctrine is accordingly inculcated in the very first of His Commandments) hence, to guard them the more effectually from sliding gradually into error on this point, they were strictly enjoined to offer their Sacrifices only

in the *one* appointed Tabernacle or Temple, which was called, "the place which the Lord shall chose to cause his *name* (*i. e.* the Manifestation of his power) to dwell there." But the Gospel dispensation being designed to be universal,* it was, of course, fitting that its worship should not be dependent on any particular *place*. And yet it was designed as much as ever, not only to keep up among Christians the same habitual conviction of the Unity of their God, but also to impress them strongly with a sense of mutual *brotherhood*, as children of the same Father, heirs of the same promises, purchased by the same Redeemer; and as sanctified and led to Christian holiness of life, by the same divine Spirit; that they might accordingly "abound in brotherly love," as joint partakers of what the Apostle calls "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost"—members of what is called in one of our creeds, "the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints." It is the same word in the original that is here rendered "communion;" and, in the translation of the New Testament,

* See Hinds's History, vol. ii. p. 97.

"Fellowship." "Catholic," as most of you must be aware, means "universal," and "Church" or Kirk (*i. e.* Circle) means the same as "Congregation" or Assembly, which are elsewhere given as translations of the same original word "ecclesia." That Holy universal Assembly, therefore, which is the Communion of Saints, *i. e.* the fellowship or community of those who are sanctified by faith in Christ, comprehends all Christians in the bond of obedience and gratitude to one Redeemer, and participation in the guidance of the same Spirit, (if they will be led by that Spirit) and in mutual love, and good-will, and concord among themselves; "endeavouring" (says the Apostle), "with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" for there is, says he, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Now it is plain that in a religion such as this, it would have been utterly unsuitable that there should be any one Temple made with hands, as of old "in the place which the Lord

had chosen to set his name there;" and equally so that there should have been several Temples of such a character; which, indeed, could hardly have failed to lead to the worship of several distinct gods. Indeed, the appointment of a particular *place* as the seat of Government (if I may use such an expression) of the all-present God, was fitted only for a rude and half-barbarian people, and for a preparatory religious dispensation, to be succeeded by a more perfect one. The final and more glorious manifestation of the Lord was to be in a Spiritual House, even the Christian Church (or Assembly) itself; of which the members "as living stones are builded together (edified)* into a holy Temple," — the "Temple of the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in them."

But lest it should have been supposed that the promise of divine presence, and manifestation of power in this third Temple was to be confined to a collective assemblage of *all* Christians (which after a very few years would have been impossible), our Lord is careful to

* See Sermon III.

give distinct notice that every Christian assembly, however small, would be entitled to this gracious and glorious privilege. "Wheresoever," says He, "two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The Apostles, accordingly, went every where preaching the word, and founding, wherever they were received, distinct religious communities (called, in the Acts of the Apostles, Churches*) quite independent (as may plainly be seen in that history) one of another, and having no common government on earth; but connected together only by their common faith in their one Master in Heaven, and their common participation in his Spirit.

But in founding these Communities or Churches, they did conform to the Jewish customs in which they had been brought up, as far as these were not at variance with the religion of the Gospel. They took for their model,—and, in most cases probably, for their foundation, in establishing a Christian Church, —the *Jewish Synagogues*.† And, hence it is,

* See Hinds's History, vol. ii. p. 11.

† See Vitringa de Synagoga.

that when we read of their "ordaining Elders in every city," it is not spoken of as if they were introducing any *new* and unheard-of kind of office. For the Jewish Synagogues (*i. e.* houses of assembly) which were frequented every week for prayer, and for the reading and expounding of the Scriptures, *had* Elders and other officers (as all places of public assembly *must* have) for their government and regulation. If, therefore, in any city, the synagogue, or connected set of synagogues there subsisting, thought fit to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, no further change in its constitution was necessary; but it became at once, by that very circumstance, a Christian Church, with all the proper officers ready appointed.

And as a Jewish Synagogue had no Priest, nor Altar, nor Sacrifice (*these* pertaining to the Temple at Jerusalem), but was a meeting for divine worship and instruction only, so, the Christians were taught to look to their one great High Priest, "ever living to make intercession for them," in the true Holy of Holies, and to his one great atoning sacrifice, answering

to the Passover, and to the yearly day of atonement. The other,—the *daily* sacrifices offered in the Temple,—answer to the prayer and self-oblation of Christians; whom the Apostle beseeches to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

It is for this purpose, my Christian Brethren, that we are now met; and we are now met on the especial occasion of setting apart a building for this particular use. It is for that reason that I have thought it needful to impress on your minds that it is not this, or any other building made with hands, that is to be regarded as the Christian Temple, but *you*, the Christian People. Reflect, therefore, I entreat you, each one of you, not now only, but at home, in the retirement of the closet, and in the business of the world, that you are a living stone,—a portion, of God's Temple. It is a glorious, but it is an awful privilege; for "if any man," says the Apostle, "defile* the Temple of God, him will God destroy."*

But in a place, and on an occasion such as

* *Φθείρει* is the word used in both places.

the present, reflect WHO it is that has promised more especially and particularly to be in the midst of you, and has declared that if two or three of you "shall agree touching something you shall ask in his name" (something, that is, which He in his wisdom shall see to be for your real benefit) "it shall be given you by his Father which is in heaven." For it should not be forgotten that while prayer, universally, is encouraged and enjoined by our Lord, *joint* prayer by a *congregation*, is more especially appointed by Him, as having something even of a sacramental character: I mean as an especial, extraordinary, and expressly-appointed means of grace;—as obtaining a *peculiar* and *promised* blessing.* For "wheresoever," says He, "two or three are *gathered together* in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

And on no occasion, surely, more than on such as these, can a Christian Congregation have reason to "agree together touching what they shall ask in Christ's name," and humbly, yet boldly, to "come unto the throne of grace

* Hinds's History, vol. ii. p. 195.

to find help in time of need," through the intercession of the One High Priest.

Pray, therefore, not with your lips only, but each in his inmost heart, that He, who is now, according to his promise, more especially "in the midst" of us, and who hears the words that never pass the lips, and "understandeth our thoughts long before," — pray that He will enable those who assemble, from time to time, in this and other places for the purpose of Christian worship and Christian instruction, to build up themselves and one another into a pure Temple, fit for the Lord's abode;—that He will accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and our offering of ourselves,—our souls and bodies—unto Him, as a rational, holy, and living Sacrifice;—and that He will be pleased to support and guide by his Spirit, in our arduous task, us, the feeders of His beloved flock;—that He will endue us with wisdom from above, and Christian piety, and unwearied patience and fortitude. And pray that He will be pleased to bless our labours with success, and to grant to our congregations his "grace to hear meekly his word, and to receive it with pure affection,

and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit." That so on that great day, when both Ministers and People shall stand before Him, the chief Shepherd, to render an account of what each shall have taught, and learnt, and done, we may meet with mutual joy, as partakers together of the glories He has prepared for us, in that last great Temple above, where, at length, "we shall see Him as He is."

SERMON V.

LUKE II. 15.

As the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.

THE point to which I wish to direct your especial attention in this passage, is, the description of persons to whom "the Lord made known," in the first instance, the wonderful and important event of the Redeemer's birth. It was not to any of the higher classes in that country, either in point of rank and power, or of human learning, that these "good tidings of great joy" were first announced, and the privilege of beholding the Infant-Saviour first granted. For it was more than a year after

(as you may collect from a comparison of the different Gospels) that the Magi, or wise-men as they are called (men, probably, of considerable eminence, but in a distant country), were admitted to the presence of Him who was *first* saluted, according to divine appointment, by simple shepherds.*

Now those circumstances which were *selected* to be recorded in the very brief histories of the New Testament writers, from the great multitude which they have left unnoticed, were selected, we may be assured, as containing some matter of *instruction* for us. The one I am now alluding to, is of a piece with the other parts of the Gospel-history;—with the very birth itself of Jesus, in a very humble station;—with His associating, by choice, with poor fishermen and peasants;—with his declarations that He came to "preach the Gospel to the poor;"—and with the conduct of His Apostles; who, under the guidance of his Spirit, addressed the same Gospel equally to Princes and People,—to Masters and Slaves; and declared that, in respect of

* See Note at the end of this Sermon.

Gospel-privileges, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond, or Free," but that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." We know that this levelling system of the Gospel did *not* contain (what would, probably, have been the most popular,) a release of subjects and of slaves from obedience to their rulers or masters; or an overthrow of any of the distinctions of earthly rank and property. And it is no less plain that there was no *exclusion* either of the great and rich, or of the wise and learned, from a share in the good-tidings. But the revelation of God in his Son being something *unconnected* either with human greatness or human philosophy, it was necessary strongly to *mark* this, by causing the religion to take its origin among the lowly in station, in learning, and in abilities; to shew that, in respect of this religion, the low and the high were to be made equal in God's sight.

"I thank thee, O Father," says our Lord, "that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The Revelation was *first* made to these ignorant, simple men, to mark that it

was no part of any human system of philosophy. The wise were not *shut out* from the knowledge thus revealed, unless, by pride and perversity, they shut out themselves; but, "except ye be converted," said our Lord, "and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." In *humble docility*, among other things, they were to imitate the example of children,* and to divest themselves of all confident trust, either in their knowledge, or their philosophical ingenuity, and "receive with *meekness* the engrafted word, which was able to save their souls." It was not because they were not *allowed*, but because so many of them were not *willing*, thus humbly to receive the light from heaven,—the revealed knowledge concerning things which Revelation *alone can* teach,—*this* was the cause why (as Paul remarks) "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called." The majority of such were like the Jewish Elders, who said, "This People, which knoweth not the law, are

* See Essay v. First Series.

accursed;" and who "marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John, perceiving them to be unlearned men," and disdained to receive *them* as teachers.

II. Hence it was (and this is the second point I would press on your attention)—hence it was, from the humbling and levelling character of the Gospel, that, at the beginning, the greater part both of the Jews, and also of the Gentiles (or Greeks, as they are all often called) rejected it. "The Jews," says Paul, "require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to us who are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

The "*Sign*" which the Jews (from their interpretation of Daniel) were led to require, was that of the Son of Man "coming in the clouds of heaven," with great glory, to overwhelm (as they expected) the enemies of their nation, and to set up a splendid and powerful worldly empire. To be told that they should find *Him*, their long-promised anointed Deliverer, in the

person of a babe lying in the manger, the reputed son of poor parents,—first visited by humble shepherds,—associating with men of low station,—proclaiming a "Kingdom not of this world," and, above all, dying the most *ignominious* death,—all this was, to such men, a "stumbling-block," or "offense;" *i. e.* something shocking and revolting to all their habits of thought, and expectations; which were fixed on triumph over their oppressors,—dominion, and temporal greatness.

The "wisdom" (or rather philosophy, as the original *σοφία* more properly might be rendered in modern English) which the Greeks sought after, was, something that should be regularly *supported by arguments from the nature of things*, and made demonstrably plain to human reason. It was not at the *humiliation* of *Jesus*, in his life and in his death, that *they*, like the Jews, took offence; but at the very notion of *a Christ;*—of *any* anointed Deliverer, *sent from heaven*, to enlighten and judge the world. To them, the expectations of the Jews were as much "foolishness," as the preaching of the Christians.

To the *Greeks*, accordingly, at Athens, Paul announced that God had "appointed a day in which He would judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He had sent:" to the *Jews*, his announcement was, "that *Jesus* is the Christ."

To the Jews, accordingly, the Gospel would not have been a stumbling-block (offense, or scandal,) had Jesus taken on Himself a glorious temporal kingdom, even at the close of His humiliation and suffering. They were probably sincere in saying, "If thou be the Christ, come down from the Cross, and we will believe." He would have taken away the offense, and satisfied their ambition, had he erected a great worldly empire, of which Jerusalem should have been the centre; giving them dominion over all other nations. This is the expectation of the unbelieving Jews at this day; and, strange to say, some Christians so far confirm that expectation, as to teach that Jesus Himself will come and establish at Jerusalem just such a kingdom, and reign in temporal splendour a thousand years.*

* See "Scripture Revelations of a Future State: Millennium."

Or had He, even not at Jerusalem, but elsewhere, — suppose at Rome, then the capital of the civilized world, founded, and transmitted to his successors, a temporal empire, possessing supreme control over all others, the natural ambition of most men,—probably even of the Jews themselves,—would have been satisfied, and the stumbling-block of the Gospel removed.

On the other hand, had Jesus and his Apostles introduced a philosophical theology,— a system of tenets respecting the nature, and attributes, and works, of the Supreme Being, supported by metaphysical proofs, the "foolishness" which the Greek philosophers complained of would have been removed. Even those who did not *assent* to what was taught, would at least, probably, have given it a respectful attention.

The philosophers of the Stoic and Epicurean sects, which you read of in the Acts, besides many others, were accustomed to maintain disputations (generally friendly) with each other; but did not usually deride each other, as they did the Christians, or cast the reproach of "foolishness."

Accordingly, they seem to have listened patiently to Paul as long as he kept (if I may so speak) on philosophical ground; proving to them, by reason, the absurdity of image-worship, and discoursing of the nature of the Deity, as far as it is discoverable by the light of nature. It is only when he begins to enter on the province of Revelation, and to speak of things which can only be made known by God's express declaration, verified by the display of miracles,—in short, when he comes to the declaration of the Gospel itself, it is then that they immediately interrupt him by derision.

III. Afterwards, in proportion as Christianity prevailed, the same qualities of human nature ("the *natural* man," as the Apostle Paul calls it,) which had led so many to *reject* the Religion, led many of its professors to *corresponding corruptions* of it. And this is the third point to which I wish to call your attention. The same kinds of error, which at first were *against* the Christian religion, found their way more and more *into* it.

On the one hand, the same spirit of worldly

ambition which had made the Gospel a stumbling-block to the Jews, began to infect Christ's kingdom. That which so many at first opposed, because it was *not* a kingdom of this world, others afterwards endeavoured to *make* a kingdom of this world. Constantine (who was never baptized till on his death-bed) seems to have favoured Christianity chiefly from political views; and (as well as many of the other emperors), to have aimed at making it an engine of worldly dominion.

And on the other hand, that search after philosophy, which had, at first, led most of the Greek sages to deride the Gospel as "foolishness," led many of those who embraced it (even so early as the times of the Apostles) to introduce their philosophical speculations *into* the religion; and instead of humbly going "to see this thing which the *Lord* had made known to men," to interweave with the Gospel revelation their own metaphysical speculations, with a view to define, explain, demonstrate, and enlarge, on rational principles, the truths of Christianity;—in short, to establish a philosophical *theory* of their religion. And so early (as

I have said) did this disposition show itself, that we find frequent allusions to it, and cautions against it, even in the sacred writers. Paul found it necessary to warn the Colossians, "Beware lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit; after the tradition of men—after the rudiments of the world; and not after Christ." And other allusions of the same kind are frequent in his Epistles.

John also, in the opening of his Gospel, is alluding in every sentence, to some of the prevailing theories of his day, with which, in his part of the Christian world, the religion had been corrupted. And, accordingly, this portion of his work can be but very dimly and imperfectly understood without some acquaintance with those wild, and fanciful, and irreverent theories. For instance, the terms he there introduces, "Life," "Light," "Only-begotten," "Truth," "Word,"—were all introduced into the theories of some of these speculators, as *proper names*, to denote certain distinct Beings (Æons as they called them), who were successive emanations from the Supreme Being Himself (to whom they gave the title of "the Fulness") and one

of whom they supposed to have been incarnate, and united with the human nature in the person of John the Baptist, and another, in Jesus Christ; with very many more extravagancies of the same kind which are recorded in some of the early Christian writers, and which I will not weary and disgust you by enumerating.

But these obsolete absurdities, though utterly undeserving of attention in themselves, are yet not to be disregarded by a theological student, for three reasons:—First, Because, as I have said, several passages in the New Testament, and in other very ancient Christian writings, have such a reference to these that they cannot be understood without that reference; as, for instance, (besides the part of John's Gospel just cited,) Paul's expressions, "it hath pleased the Father that in Him (Jesus) should all Fulness dwell," and "in Him *dwelleth all the Fulness* of the Godhead bodily," and many other passages also, in various Epistles, contain allusions to parts of these theories. And again, the statement in one of the earliest uninspired compositions,—that called the Apostles' Creed, that God is the "Maker of heaven and earth,"

refers, undoubtedly, to one of these ancient systems, which attributed the *Creation*, not to the Supreme God, but to one of those subordinate Beings alluded to.

Secondly, It is important, and instructive, to observe how very *early* and actively the taint of these daring speculations was introduced into Christianity; which they have continued, in various shapes, to corrupt, more or less, down to the present time. And,

Thirdly, and lastly, it is well worth while to remark the manner in which each form of this "philosophy and vain deceit" is *opposed* by the sacred writers. They do not encounter it by abstruse metaphysical arguments of their own, or oppose one theoretical explanation by another. All their *reasonings* are reserved for the practical *applications* of Christian truths to our own hearts and lives; but, as for the nature of God *as He is in Himself*,* and the reasons of his several proceedings, the Apostles simply deny and condemn all the speculative opinions on such

* See Essay iv. First Series.

matters,—state the facts relative to the subject, as imparted to themselves supernaturally,—and appeal to the miracles by which this revelation had been supported. John, in particular, very seldom enters much into argument on any subject; and, in the opening of his Gospel, you may observe that he entirely abstains from it,—that he meets the speculations he was opposing by certain plain assertions and denials; for the truth of which he appeals merely to the transactions he had himself seen, and the discourses of Jesus which he had heard; and the narration of these occupies *all the rest* of his Gospel.

Suppose a plain man to have been listening to a great deal of ingenious speculative conjecture, as to what must be, or are likely to be, the climate, condition, and productions of a certain distant country; and to reply, I know, as a matter of fact, and can bear witness, that none of these things are as you say; for I am intimate with a person whom you know to be of unquestioned knowledge and credibility, who is a *native* of that country; I have conversed much with him on the subject, and

he has shewn me the productions of the country: I will tell you what he has said to me, and what he has shewn me; which will prove to you that your speculations are wholly unfounded.

Now just such is the character of John's Gospel.*

* The writings of John,—both his Epistles and his Gospel, seem to have been especially directed against those ancient corrupters of Christianity, the Gnostics; which name, comprising several sects, or subdivisions of a sect, was applied to them,—originally, it is probable, by themselves,—from their pretensions to superior *knowledge* (γνῶσις) above other Christians. Some of them appear to have both taught and practised the vilest Antinomian doctrines. This censure does not probably apply to all of them. But their spiritual pride and contempt of others, and the self-sufficient arrogance with which they gave explanations of divine mysteries, and assumed that these, their explanations, contained the true *knowledge of the Gospel*,—this assumption, from which their name was derived, seems to have been common to them all.

And may we not find traces of a similar character in the present day, among some who might not inaptly be styled "modern Gnostics,"—persons who use the phrases "*knowing* Christ"—"*knowing* the Gospel,"—in a peculiar technical sense of their own, denoting the adoption of their own peculiar views, and of the phraseology of their party? Any of their party, though he, perhaps, is unacquainted with the original language of the New Testament,—though he may not be more eminent than many others, in point of Christian morality,—and may be utterly wanting in the meekness,

The restless spirit of philosophizing, however, was not easy to be subdued, or to be confined within its proper channel. I say, "its proper channel," because Christianity is not at all opposed to philosophical speculation; it does not condemn systems of astronomy or chemistry,—physiological or grammatical theories,—or moral and political philosophy,—or, in short, researches into any subject placed within the reach of our faculties; but only speculations on matters *beyond* our faculties; of which we can know nothing but by revelation; which revelation God has thought fit to bestow, not on retired philosophers alone, absorbed in deep speculations, but equally on all who have such powers of understanding, and opportunities of gaining instruction, as may fall to the lot of ordinary men, occupied in the active business of life.

charity, and humility of the Christian-character, is at once pronounced by his party to "know the Gospel," in contradistinction to another, of perhaps greater knowledge of Scripture, and with far more of a Christian spirit as delineated in Scripture; but who is, perhaps, hardly allowed to be a Christian at all, by a party of uncharitable and arrogant pretenders.

But even during the time of the Apostles, and still more, after their departure, many philosophers, on embracing Christianity, transgressed their proper limits, and sought to exercise their ingenuity on *that* subject,—one of so much interest and importance,—in order to maintain their superiority over the vulgar, even in the knowledge of divine mysteries. They acknowledged, for the most part, that the Christian revelation had made known things pertaining to God which could not otherwise have been known: but these things they seem to have regarded as fresh *materials* for human reason to work upon; and when the illumination from heaven,—the rays of revelation,—failed to shed full light on the Gospel dispensation, they brought to the dial-plate the lamp of human philosophy.

Accordingly, we find, in very early times, curious questions raised concerning the incarnation, and the nature and person of the Lord Jesus. One system, so ancient as to be alluded to by John in his Epistle, represented Jesus Christ as not really "come in the flesh," but, as a man in appearance only. Other systems

made *Jesus* to have been born a *mere human Being*, on whom, at his baptism, a certain Emanation (which they called *Christ*) from the divine Fulness, descended and dwelt in Him. And endless were the questions raised, and the different hypotheses set up, as to the *manner* in which the divine nature was united with the human in Jesus Christ;—whether He was properly to be called *one* person or two;—whether the Virgin Mary were properly to be styled the Mother of *God*;—whether Christ should be regarded as of *one substance*, or of *like* substance, with the Father;—whether the Deity *suffered* at the crucifixion;—in what way the sacrifice of Christ was accepted as a *satisfaction* for sin;—*why* this sacrifice was *necessary*;—besides (in later times) an infinite number of equally subtle speculations as to the nature of the Trinity,—the divine *decrees*,—and, in short, every thing pertaining to the intrinsic nature of the Supreme Being, and the explanation of all his designs and proceedings. And yet the motions of the earth, and the circulation of the blood, were not discovered till many ages after. The cause of the vital

warmth in animals, philosophers are not even yet agreed on; nor is it decided whether light, heat, and electricity, are substances, or qualities of bodies. But as to the *substance* of the Supreme Being, and of the human soul, many men were (and are still) confident in their opinion, and dogmatical in maintaining them; the more, inasmuch as in these subjects they could not be refuted by an appeal to experiment.

All these various systems of philosophical theology were discussed in language containing technical terms more numerous than those of almost any science; some of them taken from the sacred writers (I may say, in *every* sense of the phrase, "*taken from* them;" since hardly any theologian confined himself to *their* use of the terms) and others not found in Scripture, but framed for each occasion. These were introduced professedly for the purpose of putting down heresies as they arose. That they did not effect this object, we know by *experience;* which, indeed, would lead us to conclude that heresies were by this means rather multiplied. I am inclined to think, that if all Christians had always studied the

Scriptures carefully and honestly, and relied on these, more than on their own philosophical systems of divinity, the Incarnation, for instance, and the Trinity, would never have been *doubted*, nor ever *named*. And this, at least, is certain, that as scientific theories and technical phraseology gained ground, party-animosity raged the more violently. The advocates of the several systems did not, like the ancient heathen philosophers, carry on a calm and friendly dispute, but (to the disgrace of the Christian name) reviled, and (when opportunity offered) persecuted each other, with the utmost bitterness. For each of them having not only placed the essence of Christianity in faith, but the essence of faith in the adoption of his own hypothesis, and strict adherence to his own use of the technical terms of his theology, was led, hence, to condemn all departures from his system, as involving both blasphemy against God, and danger to the souls of men. And they employed, accordingly, that violence in the cause of what they *believed* to be divine truth, which Jesus Himself and his Apostles expressly forbade in the cause of what *they knew* to be

divine truth. "The servant of the Lord," says Paul, "must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth." But those who lose sight of the real character and design of the Christian *revelation*, generally lose also the mild, patient, and forbearing *spirit* of the Gospel.

IV. There is no one of the numberless systems I have alluded to that has not been opposed, and strongly condemned, by the advocates of some different one: but they have not usually been condemned on, what appears to me to be, the right ground. And what this is, is the fourth and last of the points to which I wish to invite your attention.

The proper objection to the various philosophical systems of religion,—the different hypotheses or theories that have been introduced to *explain* the Christian dispensation,—is, not the difficulties that have been urged (often with good reason) against *each* separately; but the fault that belongs to *all* of them, equally. It is not

that the Arian theory of the incarnation, for instance, is wrong for *this* reason, and the Nestorian for *that*, and the Eutychian for *another*, and so on: but they are *all* wrong alike, because they *are theories*, relative to matters on which it is vain, and absurd, and irreverent, to attempt forming *any* philosophical theories whatever.

And the same, I think, may be said of the various schemes (devised either by those divines called the Schoolmen, or by others) on which it has been attempted, from time to time, to explain other religious mysteries also in the divine nature and dispensations. I would object, for instance, to the Pelagian theory, and to the Calvinistic theory, and the Arminian theory, and others, not for reasons *peculiar* to each one, but for such as apply, in *common*, to *all*.*

Philosophical Divines are continually prone to forget that the subjects on which they speculate, are, *confessedly*, and by their *own* account, beyond the reach of the human faculties. This is no reason, indeed, against our believing any thing clearly *revealed in*

* See "Logic," Appendix, Art. "Person."

Scripture; but it *is* a reason against going beyond Scripture with metaphysical speculations of our own. One out of the many evils resulting from this, is, that they thus lay open Christianity to infidel objections, such as it would otherwise have been safe from. It is too late, when objections are alleged from the difficulties involved in some theory, to reply, that the whole subject is mysterious and above reason, and cannot be satisfactorily explained to our imperfect faculties. The objector may answer, "Then you should have *left* it in the original mysterious indistinctness of the Scriptures. *Your own explanations* of the doctrines of your Scriptures you must not be suffered to make use of as far as they are admitted, and then, when they are opposed, to shelter them from attack, as sacred mysteries. If you enter on the field of philosophical argument, you cannot be allowed afterwards to shrink back from fair discussion on philosophical principles."

It is wiser and safer, as well as more pious and humble, and more agreeable to Christian truth, to confess, that, of the mysteries which have been so boldly discussed by many who

acknowledge them to be unfathomable, we know nothing beyond the faint and indistinct revelations of Scripture: and that if it had been possible, and proper, and designed, that we should know *more* of such matters, more would have been *there* revealed.

And we should rather point out to objectors that what *is* revealed, is *practical*, and not speculative; — that what the Scriptures are concerned with is, not the philosophy of the Human Mind in itself, nor yet the philosophy of the Divine Nature in itself, but (that which is properly *Religion*) the *relation* and connexion of the two Beings;—what God is *to us*,—what He has done and will *do* for us,—and what *we* are to be and to do, in regard to Him.*

* "All religious inquiry, strictly speaking, is directed to the nature of God *as connected with man*, or again to the nature and condition of man *as connected with God*. Metaphysical discussions on the divine nature, similar to those in which an attempt is made to analyze or arrange the principles of the human mind, are sometimes indeed confounded with religious views, but are really compatible with the most complete denial of all religion. Religious obligation arises not from the absolute nature of God, but from its relation to us. Accordingly Epicurus and his followers were content to admit the existence of a Divine Being, as a philosophical truth, provided

The difference between *Religious* knowledge, properly so called, and what may be more properly styled theological *Philosophy*, may be thus illustrated. Different theories, we know, have prevailed at different times, to account for the motions of the planets,—the moon, and other heavenly bodies,—the tides, and various other subjects pertaining to natural philosophy. Several of these theories, which supplanted one another, have now become obsolete; and modern discoveries have established, on good grounds, explanations of most of these points. But the great *mass of mankind* cannot be expected to understand these explanations. There are, however, many points of daily *practical* use, which they *can* understand, and which it is needful for them to be informed upon. Accordingly, there are printed tables, shewing the times of the sun's rising and setting at each period of the year,—the appearances of the

it was granted that He had no connexion with the world. Now much of the speculation of the philosophers was directed to this object, that is, to the absolute nature of God. It was indeed the chief, because it seemed the more scientific inquiry, and the other was only incidental."—*Hinds's History*, vol. i. pp. 31, 32.

moon,—the times of eclipses,—the variations of the tides in different places, and the like. And all these are sufficiently intelligible, without any study of astronomy, even to such plain unlearned men as the shepherds who visited Jesus at Bethlehem. The practical knowledge thus conveyed involves no astronomical theory, but may be equally reconciled with the Ptolemaic or the Copernican systems of the universe. It is not the less possible, nor the less useful, for any one to know the times when the sun gives light to this earth, even though he should not know whether it is the sun that moves, or the earth.

Now it is just such practical knowledge as this that the Scriptures give us of the Christian dispensation. They afford practical directions, but no theory. But there is this important difference between the two cases. The human faculties could, and at length did (though it is beyond the great mass of mankind) discover the true theory of the appearances and motions of the heavenly bodies. In matters pertaining to divine revelation, on the contrary, though there must actually *be* a true theory (since there must

be reasons, and those known to God Himself, even if hidden from every *creature*, why He proceeded in this way rather than in that) this theory never can be *known* to us; because the whole subject is so far above the human powers, that we must have remained, but for Revelation, in the darkest ignorance concerning it. Many curious and valuable truths has the world discovered by philosophy (or, as our translators express it, "wisdom"); but, "the world" (says Paul) "by wisdom knew not *God*:" of which assertion the writings of the ancient heathen philosophers, now extant, afford sufficient proofs.

2. And, I would further remark, that if it had been possible, and allowable, for us to follow up, by metaphysical researches, the view opened to us by Revelation, and thus to enlarge our knowledge of God's dealings with man, Paul (as well as the other Apostles) would not have censured, but favoured such researches, and would have set us the example of so speculating. And if he *had* done this, even in those discourses of his which are not recorded in writing, we may be sure (as I have said), that

his Gospel would *not* have been considered as "foolishness" by the Greeks, even those of them who did not fully agree with him. This, therefore, supplies a useful practical rule in judging of any thing you may read or hear: whenever you meet with such a representation of Christianity, as would *not* have been a stumbling-block to the Jews, or such as would not have been *foolishness* to the Greeks, you may at once conclude that *this cannot be the Gospel which Paul preached.* For he would not have been opposed, as he was, had his doctrine favoured either men's pride and worldly ambition, or their spirit of presumptuous speculation.

3. Lastly, I would remark, as another reason for condemning such presumptuous explanations, and metaphysical theories of Christianity as I have alluded to,—all of them equally,—that, if such speculations be allowed, it is evident Christianity must be, not one, but *two* religions;*—that for the few profound theologians, and that for ordinary men; such as the humble

* See "Romish Errors," chap. ii. on "Vicarious Religion."

shepherds to whom the holy Angels announced the birth of Jesus,—the fishermen and publicans who associated with Him,—and "the common people who (we read) heard Him gladly." Now there is nothing more characteristic of the Gospel dispensation than its *oneness*;—*one* Lord,—one faith,—one hope,—in short, one and the same religion proposed to all who will heartily receive it.

But is there then, it may be objected, no such thing as theological learning to be cultivated? Are not the educated classes generally, and the clergy in particular, to be the *instructors* of the more ignorant? And if so, must they not be required to know more than they?

You may answer, certainly; and the very word "*instructors*," itself shows that this is no objection to what has been said, but a confirmation of it. Look at any such metaphysical theories of our Religion as I have been alluding to: their advocates would not, indeed, admit that they do not *themselves* understand their own curious speculations; but it is plain, at least, that the great *mass of mankind* never could

be brought to comprehend them. So that these researches into the hidden things of God, even if they were not in themselves unprofitable and presumptuous, could never qualify us to be *instructors* of the *People.*

Imagine, for a moment, such persons as the shepherds at Bethlehem, and the multitudes of men and women,—Jews and Gentiles,—Freemen and Slaves,—whom the Apostles converted,—listening to the subtle definitions of the Schoolmen,—to such abstruse theories respecting the nature of Christ,—the reasons of God's proceedings,—and the divine foreknowledge and decrees, as I have alluded to, and then consider whether these plain people could have even been expected by any one to be the wiser for what they heard.

But is learning therefore useless? My Christian friends, it would take more than a whole life of the ablest and most assiduous student, *now*, to place him even *on a level*, in many points, with such plain men as those I have been speaking of, who were the *hearers* of Jesus and his Apostles. Let any man have acquired something approaching to that know-

ledge of the languages in which the Prophets and Apostles spoke and wrote, which their hearers had had from the cradle,—let him have gained by diligent study, a knowledge of those countries, customs, nations, events, and other circumstances, with which *they* had been familiar from childhood,—and let him thus have enabled himself, by a diligent comparison of the several parts of Scripture with each other, to understand the true meaning of passages which were *simple and obvious* to men of *ordinary* capacity *eighteen centuries* ago, and he will be far more learned than it is possible for the generality of mankind to be now. He will also be a more learned theologian, in the proper sense, than any metaphysical speculator on things divine; and what is more, such learning, in proportion as it is acquired, is profitable to him, not only as a Christian, but also as a Christian *instructor*. It will help him, not indeed to explain those things concerning God which the Scriptures *omit*, but what they *contain*; to lay before himself and his hearers, not what God has thought fit to keep secret, but what He has revealed.

Yet such studies as these will not give him an advantage over those early Christians of plain common sense and moderate education, who had read and heard little on the subject, except the writings and discourses of those Apostles and Evangelists whose works have come down to us. And what was, to these early Christians, the natural and *unstrained* sense of those writings, is what *we* should seek to understand and to believe, if we would have our *faith the same as theirs*. If later Christians had been satisfied humbly to pursue *this* study, instead of human theories, there would have been less of what is reckoned abstruse theology, but more of pure Christian faith. Had they all thus honestly relied on Scripture, the mysterious doctrines of our Religion would have been received in Christian simplicity, as Scripture reveals them, without any farther definitions and explanations than Scripture itself supplies; and this would have been "able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Be it your study, now and henceforth, my Christian friends, to "receive the Kingdom of Heaven as a little child," with a pure, and

humble, and teachable mind. Accompany, in heart and spirit, the simple shepherds in their visit to Bethlehem, to see, (not what human philosophy has discovered, but) "what the Lord hath made known to us:" and when you approach, in imagination, the mighty Lord of all things, humbled, and become an infant lying in the manger, let this remind you (in the expression of the Apostle Peter) to "desire, as new-born babes, the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby:" that so at his second coming, to judge the world, you may be found an acceptable people in his sight.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the *only-wise* God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

NOTE TO PAGE 114.

It is usually taken for granted that the visit of the Shepherds, and that of the Magi, took place about the same time. And this idea is rendered familiar to our minds by pictures representing them both together, in the stable at Bethlehem. And undoubtedly such a supposition is favoured by the beginning (if we look to Matthew's Gospel above,) of the narrative—"when Jesus was born at Bethlehem;" especially by the word "*when*," which does not correspond with any word in the original.

But when we look to Luke's Gospel, we find it distinctly stated that when Joseph and Mary had performed all the rites of the Law, they departed "to *their own city, Nazareth*:" while Matthew as distinctly says, that on the departure of the Magi, Joseph and Mary being supernaturally warned, *fled suddenly into Egypt*, and remained there till the death of Herod. And even then, it seems to be hinted that they were designing to return into Judea, and turned aside to Nazareth only through fear of Archelaus, who reigned in Judea.

It seems impossible to reconcile these two accounts unless we suppose *two* distinct departures from Bethlehem; the first, recorded by Luke, and the second, by Matthew: and on that supposition the whole series of events may be explained.

It seems very natural that Joseph and Mary should have designed to take up their residence at Bethlehem, the city of David, and the birth-place of the extraordinary person who was, emphatically, the Son of David. But with such a design, it would be obviously requisite that they should first return home "to their own city, Nazareth," to dispose of their property there, and make arrangements for finally leaving it. In that case, they would have been likely to return to Bethlehem the following year.

Divine Providence, however, having decreed that He should be brought up, not there, but in the despised city of Nazareth, the holy family were compelled to fly first into Egypt, and thence to return into Galilee.

And the narrative even of Matthew favours the supposition that the visit of the Magi occurred in the second year of our Lord's age. For we are told that Herod "inquired diligently" of the Magi the time of the star's appearing; and afterwards slew all the children in Bethlehem "from *two years old* and under, according to the *time which he had diligently inquired*." (ἠκρίβωσε, accurately ascertained) "from the Wise men." Now if he had ascertained that the object of his apprehensions was only a *few days* or a few weeks old, he would have had no occasion to extend the slaughter to children up to the age of *two years*, any more than to all the inhabitants. Scruples indeed of humanity, he had none; but it is plain he was acting not in the wantonness of pure gratuitous cruelty, but on some precise information which led him to fix on a particular age. And his procedure exactly tallies with the supposition that Jesus was then in *his second year*.

It is worth while here to notice another error which painters have fostered, by representing John the Baptist and Jesus as living together when children: whereas, they were brought up far apart; the one in Judea, the other in Galilee: John, in the midst of those who knew the extraordinary circumstances of his birth, and who, being thus prepared for his coming before the world as an extraordinary personage, readily flocked, with their friends and neighbours, to hear him, though "John did *no miracle*;" while Jesus, on the contrary, grew up among those who were strangers to the circumstances of his birth; and accordingly was unnoticed till He was first pointed out by John as "the Lamb of God;" and afterwards, by working his first miracle, "manifested his power, and his disciples *believed on Him*."

SERMON VI.

ACTS XXVI. 22, 23.

I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the People, and to the Gentiles.

THE Apostle Paul, in making his defence before the Roman governor, Festus, in which he more especially addresses himself to King Agrippa, (as being a Jew,) who was present at the trial, gives a brief, and, of course, but a brief, statement of the doctrines which he had been persecuted for teaching; it being impossible for him

to enter into a detailed account of the Christian faith. And, as this short summary of his preaching, which he delivers in a single sentence, must be supposed to contain, if not the most important points of his Religion, at least the first, and foremost, and foundation of the rest, it is the more interesting to examine it, and to observe what the Apostle considered as the first steps in the knowledge of the Gospel.

The fundamental points, then, of his preaching, which he here lays down, are:—The *sufferings* of Christ,—His *resurrection* from the dead,—His being *the first* to rise from the dead,—His giving light not only to the *People* (God's favoured people, Israel), but also to the *Gentiles* (the heathen nations), who had been supposed excluded from all share of God's favour,—and, lastly, that all this was agreeable to what had been *foretold* concerning the Messiah, or Christ, by Moses and the other prophets; "Saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and should be the first that should rise from the dead, and

should show light unto the People, and to the Gentiles."

A great part of the force of the Apostle's expressions in this passage, and in a multitude of others, is in a great measure lost on many readers, from their habit of considering the word "Christ" as the *proper name*, instead of the *title*, of Jesus. Now, it is necessary not only to know, but also constantly to recollect and keep in view, that the term Messiah, or Christ, which signifies *anointed*, was, and still is, employed, and understood, by the Jews, to denote the mighty King and Prophet whom they expected, and still expect, God to raise up from among them, according to the declarations of Moses and the other sacred writers: and this, from the ceremony of anointing having always been used among them at the installation of kings, priests, and prophets.

The unbelieving Jews have always, to this day, expected this Messiah, or Christ, as yet to come. Those of them, on the contrary, who were convinced by the doctrines and the miracles of Jesus, acknowledged Him to be that person,—the Anointed, or Christ, of God. And

accordingly, the great question between the unbelieving and the believing was, Whether Jesus were the Christ, or not?

To any one who does not keep this in mind, the former part of the passage before us must appear little better than absurd; for a reader who takes the word "Christ" as a proper name, not knowing, or not recollecting, that it is a title, denoting, not the person, but the office and character, would understand the passage, as if the Apostle had described his preaching to be, that JESUS was a sufferer; a fact which none of the infidels ever thought of doubting; and which, indeed, was the chief stumbling-block and objection which led them to reject Him; because they could not bring themselves to believe that the promised CHRIST, whom they had been used to expect as a great conqueror, and temporal king, was to be a *sufferer*. This, however, was clearly foretold (clearly, I mean, after the event had explained the prophecy) by their prophets. And the Apostle describes himself as mainly insisting on it; because, if once they could reconcile themselves to the notion of a *suffering* Messiah, they would no longer have

any difficulty in admitting the pretensions of one who had shown such mighty signs and wonders as Jesus had, to *be* that promised Messiah;—in admitting, in short, that Jesus was THE CHRIST.

And here it should be observed, that there are several passages in Scripture, in some of which, as in the one now before us, our translators have used simply the word *Christ*, and, in others, *the Christ* (that is, the Anointed), although the expression in the original is in each case the same. The words in the text, for instance, might have been rendered, with equal exactness, "that the Christ should suffer."

The same doctrine, so contrary to Jewish prejudices, our Lord Himself condescended to explain to his disciples after his resurrection. They had acknowledged Him to be the Christ, and had "trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel:"* but their hopes were blasted by the unexpected event of his submitting to death. And when He showed himself to them as risen from the dead, "He

* Luke xxiv. 21.

opened their understanding," we are told, "that they might understand the Scriptures;" instructing them in the true meaning of the prophecies relating to Himself, and showing that it had always been God's appointment, and had been accordingly foretold in the Old Testament, that these things should be. "Thus it is written," said He, "and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day;"* and again, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"†

II. This *entering into glory*,—the resurrection of the Christ to an immortal and glorified state, was no less essential, and no less plainly foretold, than his sufferings and death. And what misled the Jews, was their attending only to the prophecies respecting the *glories* of the Messiah's kingdom, and keeping out of sight his humiliation and suffering; although both are equally foretold in the very same passages of

* Luke xxiv. 45, 46 † Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

their Scriptures: as, for instance, in that remarkable one of Isaiah, which told them that He should be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" that "He should bear our griefs and carry our sorrows;" and yet, that when his soul (that is, *his life*) "should be made an offering for sin, He should see his seed, He should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand."* These two seemingly contradictory points in the prophecy they were unable to reconcile: as, indeed, it was hardly possible they should, till the fulfilment of them gave the explanation. And it should be observed, that the more obscure, and intricate, and seemingly contradictory, any prophecy is, when *taken by itself*, the stronger is the evidence it affords, when an event takes place which fulfils that prophecy; because we are sure this cannot have been a *chance*-fulfilment. The more complex, and numerous, and intricate, are the wards of a lock, the more sure we may be, that a key which fits it is *the very key* to that lock.

* Isa. liii. 3, 4, 10.

III. The Apostle, in describing his preaching, mentions not only the suffering and resurrection of Christ, but also, that He should be the *first* that should rise from the dead. Some persons seem to have forgotton this, (and, it may be added, many other passages in Scripture,) in their zeal to prove that a future state was known to the Jews under the old dispensation. Some have brought forward the instances of the Shunamite's son restored to life by the Prophet Elisha, and of the dead man who revived on being placed in Elisha's sepulchre, as instances to prove that the Israelites were fully instructed in the doctrine of the resurrection. But those who argue in this manner, are plainly proving too much; for, if these had been instances of the resurrection of the dead in the sense which they are contending for, it would manifestly be false to speak of Jesus as "the first that should rise from the dead:" and (as the Apostle expresses it in other parts), as "become the first-fruits of them that slept."*

But the difference of these cases from the

* 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23.

resurrection of our Lord, and from that which He has promised to his followers, is evident, when they are attentively considered. The Shunamite's son, for example, was not raised to *immortal* life, and delivered from the power of death; but was simply *restored* to life—to the same life which he had before enjoyed, and which was afterwards, of course, terminated by death, as well as that of other mortals. And it was the same with Lazarus, and with the others whom Jesus Himself recalled to life. Whereas, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him."*

Thus, the instances recorded in the Old Testament of miraculous restoration to life—to mortal life in this present world—were quite insufficient to furnish the Jews with any proof of a resurrection to immortal life in another world.

IV. The Apostle's preaching contained the announcement of these things not only to God's People, Israel, but also to those who "had in

* Rom. vi. 9.

times past been not a people,"*—the Gentiles, who had hitherto been in darkness, but to whom the Christ was declared (in Simeon's words) as "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of God's people Israel."†

Such, then, was the foundation which the Apostle Paul laid of the Gospel system. He, and the other apostles, bore witness of the resurrection of Jesus, who overcame death, and ascended from this earth: they proved that this, and also his sufferings and death, were all agreeable to the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the promised Messiah; and they taught that He had led the way to a like resurrection to immortal happiness for his followers.

If we look to their epistles, we shall see what the points are to which they next proceeded;—what superstructure they built on this foundation. The same prophecies which speak of the sufferings of the Christ, teach also *for whom* He suffered; that "He was bruised for our iniquities; that with his stripes we are healed: that

* 1 Pet. ii. 10. † Luke ii. 32.

by his knowledge" (through the knowledge of Him) "shall He" (God's righteous servant) "justify many: for He shall bear their iniquities: and shall make intercession for the transgressors."*

And, accordingly, the doctrine every where taught by the Apostle, of the atoning virtue of Christ's sacrifice, his suffering, to save *us* from suffering, and to bring us to everlasting life, of which He gave a pledge by raising up first Himself from the dead;—all this springs immediately out of that which Paul, in his defence before Festus and Agrippa, describes himself as witnessing to all men;—that summary of the Christian faith, which we have been now examining.

This foundation of the faith was, he tells us, that the Christ should suffer; that He should rise from the dead; and that He should be the first-fruits of the resurrection from the dead—should lead the way for his sincere followers to immortal life; that He should (contrary to all the expectations of the Jews) extend to the

* Isa. liii. 5, 11, 12.

Gentiles,—to every nation that would receive Him,—the privilege of being "God's People," which till then had been confined to "his people Israel;" and that, in all this, he should fulfil the prophecies concerning the Christ. And these are the points always first introduced, and earnestly dwelt on by the Apostles, whenever they began to preach the Gospel.

To have a full and adequate view of their reason for so insisting on the resurrection of their Master in the outset, we should consider this event in three points of view.

I. It was a decisive *evidence* of the truth of the Gospel.

II. It explained, in a great degree, the *doctrines* of that religion, and the whole character of the Gospel scheme. These doctrines, indeed, are not unfrequently called "the Gospel;" and one who teaches them is said to "preach the Gospel:" but, strictly speaking, the Gospel, or *good tidings*, which the Apostles preached (that is, proclaimed), consists of the *history* of what Jesus did and suffered for us; and what are the promises and offers made us through Him. What *we* are to do, in order to avail ourselves

of these offers, is more properly called Gospel-doctrine and precept.

III. The resurrection furnished a figure or emblem of the sort of life required of Christ's followers in this world.

1. As an evidence, it was more convincing than the other miracles which Jesus wrought, because, plain as it seems to most of *us*, that these denote a divine commission in the person who performs them, the Jews of that age, (according to the popular belief among them), attributed these to magical arts, and to the assistance of evil spirits, by means of which they imagined many great wonders to be performed. But the raising of the dead was beyond what most of them had been accustomed to expect from such causes: and accordingly we are told, that, when Lazarus was recalled to life, "many of the Jews believed on Jesus,"* in consequence of this; though they must have before seen many other of the miracles He had wrought. Yet even this instance could not be nearly so

* John xi. 45.

decisive as the resurrection of Jesus; whom his enemies had themselves seen put to death, and whose body they carefully secured within the sepulchre, setting a guard of soldiers to keep watch over it; but who, nevertheless, burst forth with an earthquake from his prison in the grave, in sight of the trembling keepers, and received the triumphant welcome of his attendant angels.

This was the most important, and the most overpowering in its testimony, of all his public miracles. The Apostles, accordingly, continually appeal to the evidence of this; and the unbelievers, in this case, and in this alone, did not take refuge in the pretence of magical arts, but were forced to adopt the monstrous expedient of saying, that the disciples had stolen the body while the Roman guard were asleep.

2. Then again, with respect to the *character* of Christ's Religion, his resurrection affords to those who are truly willing to learn, a considerable portion of instruction, even on those points wherein some persons have erred, who profess to receive the Gospel, and who dwell on the resurrection as the chief part of it; I mean,

those who deny the divine character of Christ, and the atonement by his blood, and reckon Him as no more than a great prophet. His rising merely from the dead, and preaching the doctrine of a general resurrection to others, would not, certainly, prove Him to be more than man: but if He *raised Himself* from the dead by his own power, and promised to his faithful followers, not merely that they *should rise* again, but that *He* would "raise them up at the last day;" it is surely plain, He could be no less than divine. "No man," said he, "taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."*

As for merely *preaching* the resurrection of the dead, the Apostles, and indeed all of *us*, are competent to do that: but Jesus tells us that He *is* the resurrection and the life;—that He is not merely the *preacher*, but the *giver* of immortal life. He does not say merely, "I will teach you the *true way* to eternal *life*," but "I am the way, the truth, and the life."† The

* John x. 18. † John xv. 6.

same Scriptures which tell us, "Him God raised up,"* plainly show that this was that "fulness of the Godhead" which, as the Apostle tells us, "dwelt in Jesus Christ bodily."† For He is every where represented as Himself overcoming and triumphing over death. This He did by leading the way to immortal life; by being "the first fruits of them that slept;" having, as man, been subject to death; and as God "manifest in the flesh," raised Himself from death, to confirm his promise that He would raise up his faithful followers; suffering the penalty of sin in his own person, and entering first into the glory prepared for his disciples; the reward, which He, not they, had earned.

Hence, He is spoken of as being "delivered for our offences, and rising again for our justification."‡ For He not only justifies us from sin; that is, causes us to stand acquitted in God's sight, through his sacrifice of Himself for us; but also, still further, in another sense, justifies us; that is, makes us (if we will receive Him) to be actually just persons, through the inward aid

* Acts ii. 32. † Col. ii. 9. ‡ Rom. iv. 25.

and support of his Spirit. For when He rose from the dead, and "ascended on high, and led captivity captive, He received gifts for men;" namely, "that the Lord God might dwell among them.* For if a man love me," says He, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."†

3. Lastly, the resurrection of Jesus is constantly alluded to in the sacred writings, as furnishing a type, representation, or emblem, of the new and spiritual life required of the Christian: that we (as they express it,) may be "dead unto sin, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ;"‡—may become "new creatures;"—may "live henceforth, not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again."§ And this motive to personal holiness is dwelt on with peculiar earnestness by the Apostle in his exhortation to the Colossians: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."‖

* Psalm lxviii. 18. † Matt. xiv. 23.
‡ Rom. vi. 11. § 2 Cor. v. 15. ‖ Col. iii. 1.

And so much does he accordingly insist on the importance, in all points of view, of Christ's resurrection, that he considers the whole Gospel system as falling to the ground without it; "If Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain, and your faith also is vain; ye are yet in your sins." *

This is the season† more especially appointed for celebrating this great event: but Christians should bear in mind more constantly than they do, that not merely one day *in the year*, but one in *each week*, is set apart by our church, after the example of the Apostles, to commemorate this, the foundation of our faith. Some are apt to confound the Lord's-day with the Sabbath of the Jews. But the Lord's-day was observed on a different day of the week, and in memory of a different event, by Christians, from the earliest times. On the first day of the week, on the Lord's-day, as the Apostles sometimes called it,‡ (so named from the Lord's resurrection,) we always find the Christians, in the Apostolic age, assembled

* 1 Cor. xv. 17. † Easter. ‡ Rev. i. 10.

for the purpose of worship; and constantly commemorating, as a part of that worship, the sacrifice of Christ, in the manner He ordained, by partaking of the holy communion of his supper. "On the first day of the week," we read in the Acts, "the disciples came together to *break bread*."*

Never, therefore, should Christians meet together on any Sunday throughout the year, without fixing their minds on the great event which led to it. Never should they pass any one day in the year without recollecting, and dwelling on the thought, that they are called on, as partakers already of Christ's resurrection, to rise to a new life of holiness and purity;—without striving to *set their affection* daily more and more "on things above, not on things on the earth;"† and to prepare themselves for becoming, with *joy*, what they *must* be hereafter, either with joy, or with anguish unspeakable, witnesses, together with the Apostles, of Christ's glorious resurrection: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every

* Acts xx. 7. † Col. iii. 2.

eye shall see Him; and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."*

And why will so many wail? Because there are so many,—such multitudes,—who, in truth, "have pierced Him: who," as the Apostle says, "have trodden under foot the Son of God,"† by rejecting his offers, and disobeying his commands: because, He cometh to *judge* the earth; on which, as He foresaw and foretold, He should, at his coming, scarcely find faith.

Let each of us then ask himself this question; if the Lord Jesus should come to judgment to-morrow, (and He MAY come to-day; in a very few years He *must* come, to each one of us,) should I be ready to rejoice, or to wail, and grieve, and shudder, at his appearing? This is a profitable question *now:* when He does come, it will be too late to think of it with any advantage; though, we may be sure, we shall then think of nothing else. Let us, therefore, pray fervently that we, at least,

* Rev. i. 7. † Heb. x. 29.

may be found of the number of those that shall, as the Apostle expresses it, "love his appearing." "For to them," says the same Apostle, "and to them only, is laid up a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give them at that day."*

* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

SERMON VII.

JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

THE consideration of the transaction now before us, is not only suitable to this day,* and in itself very interesting, but is also the more important because several of the circumstances of it are in general not rightly, or not fully, understood.

It will be found on a careful examination that the doubts of the Apostle Thomas were of a far different nature from what is, I believe,

* Easter-day.

commonly understood; — that those doubts were removed in a different way from what some have represented; and that the testimony which he bore, not only to the resurrection, but also to the divine nature, of Jesus, is one of the most remarkable and decisive that occur in Scripture.

We are told in John's Gospel, that Thomas was not present when our Lord appeared to the rest of the Apostles, and that when they told him, "We have seen the Lord," he said unto them, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." He had not as yet seen Jesus after his resurrection; but he professed his unwillingness to trust even his own eyes, unless he were permitted to ascertain the reality of so great a miracle, by the touch also; — by feeling with his hands the impression of the wounds in his Master's body, from the nails of the cross, and the spear which pierced his side.

This confirmation also, Jesus, in gracious condescension, offered to afford him; He appeared

again, and "stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you; then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus said, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Now in this transaction it is ordinarily taken for granted that Thomas did not give full credit to the testimony of his fellow Apostles as to what they reported to him. This is indeed to give a most unfavourable account of his doubts; for he could not but be certain that if they were in the possession of their senses they must know the person of their Master, whom they had so long familiarly lived with; and that if they had the smallest portion of integrity, or of piety, they must be incapable of combining together to mislead him by a false report. To doubt their testimony, therefore, would have been to suspect them either of being the wildest of all enthusiasts, (or rather of

madmen, for no enthusiasm ever yet went such a length*), or else of being the vilest of impostors. But this interpretation is as groundless, as it is improbable in itself, and unjust to the character of Thomas. He does not at all question the truth of their report; and though he still doubts the true bodily resurrection of Jesus, that is not on the ground of his supposing them not to have seen what they profess to have seen; for he declares that he should not be convinced even if he were *himself* to *see* the same; he would not be satisfied, he says, without handling also, and examining by the touch, the body of his Master, that He was truly the same living man whom he had known before his crucifixion.

In order to understand the precise nature of Thomas's doubts, you must bear in mind that

* At least I know of no such case. And it is not a little remarkable, that the devoted followers of the pretended prophetess, Joanna Southcote, who seem to have gone the utmost lengths of human credulity,—who, after the palpable failure of her predictions, and her death, fully expected and foretold her miraculous restoration to life, yet were not so far blinded by their enthusiasm as to believe that she actually *did* rise from the dead.

the belief in the appearance of Ghosts or Spirits was very prevalent at that time, and in that country: many, indeed, even at this day, have the same belief; and they always suppose that these apparitions, though perceptible to the eye, are not perceptible to the touch, but are of an unsubstantial nature, like shadows, or the colours of the rainbow, or the sunbeams. That the belief in such apparitions was very common among the Jews, we may collect from several passages in the Gospels. For instance, when the disciples were in a boat, and Jesus came to them walking on the water, "they were afraid," we are told, and "thought *they saw a spirit*;" on which Jesus graciously deigned to allay their terrors, saying, "Be of good cheer—it is I; be not afraid." We find also in the Acts, that when Peter had been miraculously released, and appeared at the door of the house where some of the disciples were, they, on the first report of the damsel who had gone to the door, accounted, at first, in a like manner, for his most unexpected appearance; saying, "It is his angel." And again, Luke tells us of the appearance of

Jesus to the Apostles after his resurrection; on which they were "terrified," says he, "and affrighted," and supposed that they had seen a spirit; and He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them his hands and his feet," and afterwards partook of food in their presence.

This last passage fully explains the nature of Thomas's doubts; of which, it seems, the other Apostles had at first been partakers. Astonished as they naturally were at so stupendous a miracle as that of a dead man returning to life, and as yet "slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets had spoken," concerning the resurrection of the Messiah, they at first accounted for the appearance before them according to the then prevalent and admitted notions, and supposed that it was not their very Master who was present in flesh and blood, as before his death, but his ghost—a shadowy phantom in his likeness. And in condescension to these

their doubts, our Lord deigned to satisfy their minds, by receiving food at their hands, and eating of it in their presence, on more than one occasion. And this circumstance is alluded to by Peter, in his first preaching to the Gentiles; doubtless to satisfy them, as it had the Apostles themselves, that they had not been deluded by any visionary appearance or phantom: "Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto Witnesses chosen before of God: even to us, who did *eat and drink* with Him after He rose from the dead."

Having seen, then, what was the nature of Thomas's doubts, it is next to be considered in what manner they were removed. Some persons who have paid but slight attention to the history of the transaction, have supposed that he actually did handle and examine the person of his Master; whereas the words of the narrative imply the very reverse; for as soon as Jesus had offered him this proof, we are told, not that he accepted the offer, but that he expressed his full conviction, by at once exclaiming, "My Lord and my God." He was

convinced by the clear evidence of his eyes and ears (though he had before declared his distrust of that evidence), that it was truly his Lord who stood before him. And this is confirmed by the words of Jesus himself, which immediately follow: "Thomas," said He, "because thou hast *seen* me, thou hast believed." His faith, therefore, however weak, appears to have been somewhat stronger than that of the other disciples; for *he was* convinced as soon as he saw Jesus; whereas they, when they first saw Him, "supposed," we are told, "that they had seen a spirit."

There is this also to be remarked respecting the faith of Thomas; that his profession of belief, that it was truly his Master who appeared, was accompanied with an acknowledgment of his divine nature; he hails Him not merely as the same Jesus who had lately died on the cross, but as his "Lord and his God." There are some professed Christians who, though acknowledging the truth of the Scriptures, yet represent Jesus Christ as no more than a man sent from God for the instruction of the world. This acknowledgment of Thomas is, of course,

one of the many passages which they find it not easy to reconcile with this doctrine; and the only way by which most of these persons evade the force of it, is to represent the words in question as merely an *exclamation* expressive of astonishment, and not as applied by Thomas to Jesus himself. Now the very circumstance of their resorting to this mode of interpretation shews that they themselves think the words, if *not* so interpreted, would be a strong proof against them; since otherwise they would not have taken any pains to explain them away. By their contending that the expression of Thomas is to be understood as an exclamation, they seem to acknowledge that it would furnish an unanswerable argument, if it were not understood as an exclamation.

And that it cannot be so understood (though it may appear doubtful to any one who reads the passage only in the English translation), is so perfectly clear, from the expression in the original Greek, that no scholar who has not obstinately made up his mind beforehand can have any doubt on the subject. The original expression, translated literally word for word,

is, "*the* Lord of me, and *the* God of me:" the article "the" is never employed in an exclamation, which would have been expressed by "Lord!" or "Oh Lord!" not by the words "*the* Lord." The passage, therefore, will absolutely bear but one interpretation, viz. as signifying, "*Thou art* my Lord and my God."

Such must have been, then, Thomas's belief; and we may be sure that Jesus, if He had *not* been a Divine Person, but only a great Prophet sent from God, would not have failed to undeceive him, and to reject that worship which is due to God only; else He would have been favouring an error leading to idolatry; which no one really sent from God would have done. Since, therefore, Jesus accepts this address, and does not disown the appellation of God, applied to Himself, we have in this (as well as in a multitude of other passages), a clear proof, that if we would believe in Him at all, we must believe in Him as perfect God, no less than perfect Man; God manifested in the flesh,—as the Word, which we are told, in the same Gospel, was God, and was "made flesh, and dwelt among us,"—who is, as He tells us, "one with

the Father,"—"in whom," says Paul, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."*

Thomas's belief, then, though late, was complete and correct. Our Lord, however, signifies that a less overpowering evidence than the Apostles received, must suffice as a foundation for the faith of others. "Thomas," said He, "because thou hast *seen* me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed." And this blessing is the only one reserved for those who have not been eye-witnesses of the resurrection; for our Lord thought that *sufficient* evidence was afforded to all who should have the Gospel preached to them; and accordingly He does not merely pronounce a blessing on the believers, but also a curse on the unbelievers, saying, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

And doubtless the evidence *is* sufficient; for all the prophecies relative to the death and resurrection of the Christ, which the Apostles did not at first understand, have been long since unfolded, and their application made plain;—

* See Note at the end of this Sermon.

the very backwardness of the disciples, at first, to believe in the resurrection, renders their testimony to it the stronger;—the miraculous powers which they shortly after received from the Holy Ghost confirmed the truth of what they taught;—and the belief that God, who had manifested Himself among them in Christ Jesus by so many mighty works, would suffer them to be deluded by an empty phantom, and mislead them as to the resurrection, is such as could never have been long and deliberately entertained by themselves, but was merely the momentary effect of their first astonishment.

No one, accordingly, now denies or doubts the resurrection of Christ, who does not also deny, or doubt, the whole of the Gospel-history. And those who do so, must stand convicted of wilfully resisting the force of truth, unless they can explain what antichristians have been vainly endeavouring for nearly eighteen hundred years to explain, how it could be that so many men, professing themselves, as the Apostles and other disciples did, to be eye-witnesses of the Christian miracles, and performers, too, of like miracles themselves, should

voluntarily pass their lives in toils, dangers, and sufferings, for the sake of propagating what, if false, they must have known to be false.

There is no one, it may be presumed, of those who now hear me, that does not believe in the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, and the rest of the Christian miracles: there are, comparatively, very few in this country who do not profess this belief. But is then our Lord's blessing on such as "have not seen, and yet have believed;"—is this his blessing, I say, pronounced on *all* these?—on all who give their assent to the truth of the Gospel history? The question is surely an important one, and ought to be considered by each one among us, with a view to his own salvation; for if any one does not believe in the manner that he is required to believe by Christ himself, "the author and finisher of our faith," on whom, or on what, can he rest any hopes of eternal life? What blessing can he look for, if he is excluded from the blessing of the Redeemer?

Now that the faith required of Christians, and through which they are to attain salvation, does not consist in the bare belief and acknow-

ledgment of the facts of the Gospel-history, is plain from the words of James, who tells us that the demons also "believe and tremble;" and from our Lord's own declaration, that He will reject those who have not only received his doctrines, but have even preached, nay, and wrought miracles in his name, if they do not give proof of their faith by their obedience to Him; He assures us that He will disown them, saying, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not."

And, in truth, nothing can be more natural and reasonable than the account the Scriptures give of a saving Christian faith; viz. as a lively faith,—a "faith that worketh by love;" bringing forth as its fruits all the graces of a Christian life. For, in the affairs of this life, no one would be reckoned to believe in and acknowledge a benefit received, if he treated his benefactor with ingratitude; no one would be said to shew his faith in the efficacy of any medicine to cure him and preserve his life, who should praise, but refuse to take, the medicine; no one would be considered as acknowledging the king as his lawful sovereign, who should bear arms against him, or who should shew him no reverence or

obedience; nor would he be supposed to believe in the value of a wedge of gold, or of a "pearl of great price," who should readily part with it for the most trifling bauble. How then should he be reckoned truly to believe in Christ, as his Redeemer, who shows no gratitude for so vast a benefit? How should any one be considered as having faith in the Saviour's atoning blood, who will not "come unto Him that he may have life,"—who studies not to tread in his steps, and "to purify himself *even* as He is pure?" The Apostle complains that there were men in his time who, professing to know God, "in works denied Him." Such faith as that (if it is to be called faith), cannot be such as saves men, but rather such as condemns them; since it is an acknowledgment of the truth of that religion which their actions disown and contradict.

And do not, I intreat you, satisfy yourself that your faith is a lively, and profitable, and saving faith, because you are not guilty of such gross vices as some of your neighbours, but bear a respectable character, and enjoy a quiet conscience: it is possible for a man's conduct to give the lie to his professions in one point,

if not in another: and such will surely be the case with any one who does not carefully examine his own heart.

Ask yourself, then, Do I "seek *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and reckon all earthly things as dross in comparison? if not, I am not truly a believer in God's promises; for it is plain that nothing in this world can stand a competition with eternal life, "the pearl of great price." Do I love my Saviour above all things, and strive to devote myself to Him more earnestly than I seek for any other object? if not, I have not true faith in Him *as* my Saviour; for He certainly *deserves* all this love and devotion. Do I aim at improving in the knowledge and practice of Christ's religion, more than at any worldly advantage? Do I prize God's favour above all human applause,—all earthly gratification? Am I *more* studious to deserve the character of a sincere Christian, than that of a wise man,—a wealthy man,—a gentleman,—a man of consequence? Do I seek the advancement of my children in the knowledge and love of God, more than their advancement in life, and in worldly credit? Supposing

the Gospel to be true, all these things *ought* to be; he is not, therefore, truly a believer who does not study thus to acknowledge these truths, not only with his lips, but in his life. Thomas's faith would not have been accepted if he had merely *said*, "My Lord and my God," and had not felt and acted as was due to his Lord and his God. But Christ knew his heart; he, accordingly, as well as the rest of the Apostles, passed his life, as he was bound by his office, in the dangerous and toilsome task of preaching the Gospel among the obstinate and hard-hearted; and ended it, as ancient histories inform us, by suffering martyrdom in the cause of his Master. His Master is likewise ours; and, at the last day, He will stand before us, and before all mankind, who will then become, whether they will or no, witnesses, together with the Apostles, of His resurrection. "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and *every* eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

But why should they wail because of Him? Why will not men rather "love his appearing?" Because there are such numbers, unhappily,

who confess Jesus with their lips, but in their lives deny Him; who (as Paul expresses it) have "counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace,"* by disobeying and neglecting Him.

Whether you will be of the number of those that will then bewail, or that will rejoice at his appearing, is left now to your own choice. Imagine, therefore, that He now stands before you, as He then *will* be before you, and as He stood before the Apostle Thomas. Contemplate with the eye of faith those precious wounds impressed on His blessed body for our sakes: imagine that you hear Him inviting you, as He does by His holy word, and by us, the ministers of that word, to believe in Him, while there is time to believe in Him profitably, and to implant that faith in your affections, and display it in your life. And may his Holy Spirit bring you to be partakers of the blessing He promised to those who having "not seen, have yet believed," and "that believing, ye may have life through his Name!"

* Heb. x. 29.

NOTE TO PAGE 179.

This accordingly, and several other passages which could not but convey, to men of plain understanding, in the times when they were written, the idea of our Lord's divine character, (which however is still more strongly implied in the *general tenour* of the New Testament than in any particular passage,)—such passages, I say, some persons find it so difficult to explain away, though predetermined not to admit the doctrine, that they are driven to declare that the Apostles themselves were *mistaken* as to the true character of their Master; or at least expressed themselves in a manner which could not fail to lead their readers into a mistake.

Now that Jesus should *knowingly* leave his Apostles under a mistake, which must lead to idolatry, is inconsistent with his being a person of moral perfection, or even of common honesty; and his doing so unknowingly, is equally inconsistent, not only with superhuman wisdom, but even with ordinary good sense. So that, on either supposition, it will follow that Jesus must have been not only no heaven-sent prophet, but not even a wise and good man. So difficult is it to stop short of a rejection of Scripture, if we once begin, by making our *own conjectures the standard by which to try Scripture*, instead of taking Scripture as the standard for ourselves.

It is quite otherwise with the works of Aristotle, or Cicero, or Bacon, or any other writers who do not pretend to divine revelation. We may hold such books in great esteem, without believing what we find in them any further than our own reason approves: and even if we reject, without sufficient reason, some part of what these authors teach, and thus lose a part of the truths they inculcate, we may yet profit by another part, and be in no danger of continually rejecting more and more.

But it is not so with a writer who professes (as the Apostles do) to be communicating a divine revelation, imparted to him through the means of miracles. In matters indeed unconnected with religion, such as points of history, or natural philosophy, he may be as liable to error as other men, without any disparagement to his pretensions; but if we reject as false *any part* of the *Religion* which he professes himself divinely sent to teach, we cannot, consistently, believe but that his pretensions are either an imposture or a delusion, and that he is *wholly* unworthy of credit.

SERMON VIII.

JOHN XIV. 23.

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

THESE words plainly have a reference to the promise which our Lord had, just before, in the same discourse, made to his disciples; that He would "send them a Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, that He may abide with you for ever: for He dwelleth *with* you; and shall be *in* you."

This promise had its first and most openly-striking fulfilment in the extraordinary gifts poured out on the disciples on the day of Pentecost. That event was (as I observed in a

former discourse) the opening and commencement of the third and last part of the Christian dispensation; — it was the consecration, or dedication, of the third Temple of the One God. Jesus Christ had repeatedly represented himself as the Temple, being the man in whom it had "pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell,"—even as, hitherto, the Temple at Jerusalem had been "the place which the Lord had chosen to cause his Name to dwell there." He, the second Temple, having been removed from earth, the government then, and thenceforth, of God's People, was, on that day, assumed by the Holy Spirit, who was to "abide with them for ever;"—of whom the Universal or Catholic Church is that Temple, whereof individual Christians are "the living stones."

Hence it is that our Church has appointed the Sunday next following the festival of that day, as the season for more especially recalling our attention to that threefold manifestation of God, which we express by the word Trinity.

Although however the extraordinary gifts

bestowed on the disciples on the day of Pentecost were, as I have said, the most openly-striking and public fulfilment of the promise made, we must not suppose that that promise was confined to the Apostles and other early disciples, or to such miraculous powers as were conferred on them; since we have our Lord's assurance, that "if *any* man love Him, and keep his word, He will come to him, and make his abode with him;" and again, "He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." And the same Evangelist who records this discourse, declares, in his Epistle,—speaking, evidently, of Christians generally,—"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." And Paul, in like manner, is evidently speaking of Christians generally, when he says, "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you;" since he reminds his readers, that "if *any* man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." From all which, and much more that I might cite to the same purpose, we clearly learn that the influence of the divine Spirit which our Lord promised, is not to be understood merely of such powers as the

Apostles and other early Christians were endued with, of healing the sick, and speaking various languages, &c., powers indispensably necessary for the first preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, but not the gifts most valuable to the individual Christian. To each of *us* is promised, no less, the far more important benefit of the inward comfort,—the guidance,—the spiritual sanctification of heart, which every man needs, and of which every Christian is invited to partake. For every Christian, we know, is bound to love his Redeemer, and strive to keep his commandments; and to *all* such He has promised to "manifest Himself," and to dwell in their hearts, by his Spirit, without which "we are none of his." "Repent and be baptized," said Peter to the multitude, "into the name (for so the word should be rendered) of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord your God shall call." The gift of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is held out to all who have been thus called; *i. e.* have

heard the Gospel preached to them,—and is as effectual for their private individual wants as the miraculous powers bestowed on the Apostles were, for the wants of the infant-church. The necessity of miraculous evidences to establish our religion has ceased,—since enough evidence has been left to satisfy a candid mind;—the gift of tongues is no longer required,—since ignorant fishermen are not (as then) called upon suddenly to proclaim the Gospel in distant lands; but every individual Christian who comes into the world, being born of the frail and sinful race of Adam, has need of being "born again," as our Lord says, "of water and of the Spirit, in order to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." And we have daily need throughout our lives of the renewing influence of the Spirit to enable us to know and love God, since "no one," says our Lord, "can come unto me, except my Father who hath sent me draw him." We all need his heavenly light to clear our eyes from spiritual blindness, and to enable us to see all things in their true colours, and shape, and magnitude. We all need his "Spirit which helpeth our infirmities," that we may "be strong in the

Lord, and in the power of his might," and "able to stand against the wiles of the devil."* From all the delusions, in short, and from all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the Christian can only be preserved by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him; which he has, therefore, as much need to seek, and may have as full confidence of obtaining, as the Apostles themselves. He must not, indeed, expect to receive, like them, any direct and perceptible inspiration, any more than other miraculous powers; because of these he has not the need they had. He must not fancy that every notion pertaining to religious subjects, which occurs to his mind, and impresses itself on his feelings, is an immediate suggestion of God's infallible Spirit; but we may learn, by attentive listening, to distinguish very plainly the voice of that Spirit, because we have the Scriptures, which were dictated by that Spirit, open before us, from which we may perceive (if we study them with a truly humble and candid mind) what is his will, and to what sort of life He would lead us. In them we have, as it were, a lasting picture

* Eph. vi. 10.

of Him, which we must consult, in order that we may recognize Him, and reject false appearances. He leads us to have a clearer insight into the Gospel revealed in those Scriptures, and to conform our lives and hearts to it. Whatever suggests to us any thing not agreeable to God's written word, we may be sure is not from Him. And as for any suggestion or persuasion that we need not read the Scriptures, or that the right interpretation of them requires no diligent care, and that we have such an infallible guide within us,—or that some boastful pretender has such, —as does away the necessity of exerting our minds in patiently applying to the study of the Bible,—or that we are at liberty to receive, or reject, or alter the sense of each passage, in conformity with what seems to our minds reasonable or not, in the same manner as when we are reading the work of any human writer,—every such suggestion, I say, comes from the proud and disobedient Spirit who would lead us to imitate his presumptuous rebellion. Faith in ourselves,—faith in the pretensions of man,—are the very opposite of Christian Faith, which is faith in God only.

To those then who are disposed to distrust themselves, and to trust in God, and to use that care and diligence in studying his Word, which becomes an humble-minded Christian, I will offer some remarks on the method we should pursue for making out the true meaning of the passage now before us.

I have already remarked to you that when our Lord says, "If any man love me, *he* will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," He was alluding to the promise just before made, of his sending them a *Comforter*; "I will pray the Father, and He will send you another Comforter." Now, if these several passages were each to be understood literally, and in its full force, they would contradict each other; and there is no doubt they were so worded on purpose that they might limit and explain each other, and that we should find no satisfactory interpretation of them, *till* we had thus compared them, and modified the one by the other. We have in one passage a distinct view of three separate agents,—the *Son*, who should pray to the Father for the Spirit to be

sent to his disciples,—the *Father*, who should send Him,—and the *Holy Spirit* Himself, who should be sent. "What can be plainer,"—a man might say, "than that the Sender, and the Sent, and He at whose prayer He was sent, must be three distinct Beings?" Nor, indeed, is it this or that particular passage that needs to be guarded against conveying such an impression, but the whole tenor and drift of the Scriptures; which plainly represent God's people as under the government, first, of Jehovah, who had placed his Name in the Temple at Jerusalem; secondly, under that of Jesus Christ, who was Emmanuel, "God with us;" and, lastly, under that of the Holy Spirit, of which Christians are called the Temple.

Expressly, as it seems, to guard against such an interpretation,—against the notion of three divine Beings,—our Lord takes care to indicate (in the very next sentence to the one just cited), that the Comforter the disciples are to expect is no other than Himself in another character: "I will not," says He, "leave you *comfortless; I* will come unto you;". . . . "at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in

you:" thus assuming to Himself the very office,—the distinct and appropriate office,—which He had just before assigned to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. And yet again, still further to guard against any undue distinctions between Himself, as executing this office, and God the Father, He goes on to say, "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make our abode with him:" thus attributing to Himself and the Father, conjointly, the very same office which He had just above attributed, first, to the Holy Spirit alone, and then, to Himself alone. All this—unsatisfactory, and confused, and perplexing, as it must appear to any one who is seeking to learn (what the Scriptures were never designed to teach) the nature of God, absolutely, and as He actually exists,—all this must at least have indicated to the disciples who heard it, that there is but One God, the author of all,—one, not figuratively,* but literally and numerically—the "God whom no man hath seen at any time, but whom the only-

* Logic. Appendix, Art. "One."

begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared," (John i.)—the "God who was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," (2 Cor. v.)—and who was afterwards to sanctify, and invisibly dwell, as in a holy Temple, in the hearts of his faithful People.

But for what purpose, then, it may be asked, does Jesus use those other expressions, of his "going to the Father," who is "greater than He,"—of the Father's sending another Comforter, and the like? These, and many other passages of Scripture, can be understood aright, only, I conceive, by those who keep in mind steadily the main design of the Scripture-revelations; which is, not to increase our *speculative* knowledge of divine things, but to teach us, for practical purposes, what God is *relatively* to us,—what He has done, and will do, towards us.

Much there is, we have reason to believe, quite hidden from us, pertaining to the divine Being, that is totally independent of any relation to mankind; and we are also led to infer from several incidental glimpses afforded us by revelation, that there are certain distinctions in the divine nature, which correspond in some

measure with the several relations to ourselves in which God has manifested Himself to us. But what these distinctions are, we are quite unable to comprehend; nor are we encouraged to indulge in curiously inquiring. Scripture chiefly teaches us what they are *not;* guarding us carefully against the notion of three Gods: but what are the relations *to each other* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it leaves unexplained; dwelling strongly on their relations *to us*, as constituting a threefold manifestation to mankind of the one God.

Now, in relation to ourselves, it is, in one respect, as if there really *were* three distinct Beings, one of them, at the request of another, sending to men the third. For Jesus, whom the disciples had seen and been living with, as a *man*, was, *as a man*, to be taken away from them, and ascend from the earth before their eyes: and this his departure was to be followed, according to his promise, by the miraculous gifts with which they were endued on the succeeding Pentecost, when "there came a sound as of a mighty rushing wind, and tongues of flame appeared, which sat on each of them." The Holy

Spirit of God then came upon them, without any appearance to them of the *man* Christ Jesus. And again, not only the man Christ Jesus, who "became obedient unto death," was, as a man, inferior to God whom He calls his Father, but also the manifestation of God in Him was incomplete, even in comparison of what was afterwards revealed to the Apostles; and the divine Glory was in a great degree veiled during his ministry on earth; so that it was no part of his office to make known all, even of what was, eventually, to be made known, of the Gospel-scheme. The *Father*,—by which term, when contrasted with the *Son*, appears generally to be meant, the *unrevealed* God—that portion of the divine dispensations which is not disclosed—is greater, we are told, than the Son; *i. e.* than what *was* revealed in Jesus. And hence it is that He tells us of that which "no man knoweth, no not the Son, but the Father only," and of things "which the Father hath put in his own power;" *i. e.* which Jesus in his ministry on earth was not to reveal.

In respect, then, of the sacrifice of Christ, and of the spiritual gifts poured out on the

disciples, it was the same thing, in *relation* to *them*, as if there had been really three distinct Beings. But, on the other hand, to guard them against supposing that there *are* such three Beings, or that God is divided, or that any but the One eternal God can claim divine worship,—for this purpose, Jesus proclaims his being One with the Father. He says not "I and the Father are *equal*;" but, "I and the Father are one:" even as Paul declares of Him, that "in Him dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead." And Jesus also says, that the Father dwelleth in Him, and He in the Father; to point out, as it should seem, that it is a spiritual union, and not a literal, local, indwelling, that He means; since, in the literal sense, two things could not be, each, *in* the other. And as He is one with the Father, so, He represents Himself as likewise one with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, whom He had promised to send; and whose office He represents Himself as fulfilling, when He says, "I will not leave you *comfortless*, I will come unto you." All which different representations being inconsistent with the belief of three Gods, or of any division of the

divine nature in itself, but reconcileable with, and leading to, the belief of God's being revealed to us in three characters (which was anciently the ordinary sense in our language of the word Person)—as standing in three relations to us,—there can be no doubt that this is what was conveyed,—and therefore must have been intended to be conveyed,—to ordinary, unphilosophical, but candid, pious, and teachable Christians of those days, by such passages as those above cited. For, these passages, if interpreted literally and separately, each by itself, without reference to the others, would seem to contradict each other; but if taken together, serve to correct, explain, and limit each other.*

Again, we find in the accounts given us of the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit mentioned as descending on Him in a visible form, accompanied with a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son." Now if any one were desirous of establishing the conclusion that Jesus was not a divine Being, but merely a man or angelic

* See Essay vii. Second Series; "On Seeming Contradictions in Scripture."

person,* endued by God with supernatural powers, and if he were seeking for texts of Scripture to support such a conclusion, this narrative would probably appear favourable to his views. For we here find, he might urge, Jesus described not as Emmanuel,—God with us,—as the eternal "Word made flesh,"—and as "one with the Father," but as a distinct Being from that God who favoured Him, at his baptism, with the gift of the divine Spirit: according to the expression afterwards used by Peter (Acts x. 38), who speaks of "Jesus of Nazareth, whom *God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power*." And after the Baptism, (he might add), we read of Jesus being "led by the Spirit, into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil."

These passages, I say, *taken by themselves*, might (as well as several others of a like import) be brought forward as favouring the notion of Jesus being no more than a man, or angelic creature; highly favoured, indeed, by divine support and inspiration, but no otherwise of

* This was the explanation of this narrative adopted by some of the ancient Gnostics.

divine nature than the most eminent prophets, and dying for us only in the same sense in which the martyr Stephen may be said to have died for us: viz. in confirmation of the truth of his religion.

But such an interpretation must be rejected by any one who is candidly searching for truth in the Scriptures, because it would make one part of Scripture contradict another;—it would produce an utter inconsistency between these passages and those others in which both the name, and attributes, and offices of God are assigned to Jesus; who received and accepted divine worship and adoration on several occasions;—who is said to be "over all, God, blessed for ever;" "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily,"—who declared Himself "one with the Father," and who makes Himself also one with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, by promising to come to his disciples to comfort them, and to be "with them always;" and that where "two or three are gathered together in his name, there He will be in the midst of them."

To what end then, it may be said, are those

other, so apparently different, representations given, in other places? It is for the sake of conveying to us the best notions we can be enabled to form, not of the nature of God as He is, but of the dealings of God with Man; by presenting to our minds several different views, as it were, of one object, the whole of which we could not take in at a glance; and which views are, each of them, correct, to a certain extent, but would each of them mislead us if dwelt upon exclusively, and considered apart from those others that were designed to correct and explain it.

Thus, in the case of the visible appearance which indicated the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus, as well as in Peter's expression of his having been "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power," the intention was, to point out to men the important truth, that Jesus, whom they saw to be, what, in fact, He was, really and properly a *man*, did not preach or act according to any devices of *man's* ingenuity, but was divinely commissioned, and acted according to the plans of divine wisdom. This was the *first* point to be established. This was to make

good his claim of being the Lord's *Anointed* (Messiah, in the Hebrew, and Christ, in the Greek), whom the Israelites had been taught to expect under that title; all rich endowments being commonly expressed in Scripture by the metaphor of anointing, on account of the customary use, in those days, of precious ointments by great persons, and on great occasions; especially in the appointment of Kings, Priests, and Prophets, among the Israelites. The Jews, therefore, might readily understand the promised Deliverer, to be called, by way of distinction and above all others, the Anointed or Christ of God; in respect of his being, in a high and peculiar sense, both King, Priest, and Prophet, and especially possessed of divine gifts and excellencies. To this, accordingly, it is that Peter alludes in his *first* announcement of Him to the Gentiles, as "Anointed by God with the Holy Ghost and with power." And so also, it was at the *first* opening of the ministry of Jesus that the visible appearance took place at his baptism, which the Evangelists have recorded: it being, as I have said, the first point to be established, that Jesus

was truly the Christ; or, at least, was sent from God.

Now the notion thus conveyed concerning our Lord's nature, though far from being the *whole* truth, or even the whole of what was, shortly after, to be made known to Christians, yet was correct and true as far as it went. It was the beginning of a course of gradual and progressive instruction on the subject; and it is not calculated to mislead any except those who insist on confining themselves exclusively to these first rudiments; — interpreting this portion of Scripture so as to be at variance with what follows,—and forcibly restricting the meaning of all that the Apostles afterwards teach us, so as not to go beyond the limits of their introductory teaching. Those who interpret Scripture on such a plan, are acting like a person who should studiously cut off and cast away every portion of a mature fruit that was not fully formed in the blossom that preceded it.

But the introductory instruction given was (as I have said) correct as far as it went; and was sufficient to answer the immediate present pur-

pose for which it was designed. For it was true that, in many points, the case was the same as if Jesus had been no more than a man extraordinarily inspired, and "anointed with" the divine Spirit.

For, suppose for a moment that this *had* been the whole truth: in that case, the words He uttered,—the doctrines He taught, would have been the dictates of divine and infallible wisdom and truth; and *so they were:* the signs and wonders He displayed would have been performed by the power of the Most High; and *they were so:* the example He set, might have been of a human life completely conformed to the divine will; and such it was: the commands He gave,—the institutions and ordinances He established, would have rested on divine authority; and this was, in fact, the case. In respect then of all these points,—which were the first, though not the whole of what was to be set before those called to receive the Gospel,—in respect of these first rudiments of the faith, it made no difference in what way divine knowledge and power were present with Him. It was sufficient, at first, to establish that, as Peter

points out, "God *was* with Him" in some way:—that the Religion He came to establish was of divine origin. And *that* accordingly was all that probably was conveyed to Peter's hearers by that speech; and to the hearers of Jesus Himself, when He told them that He "came forth from God,"—that "his Father had sent Him," and the like. A further and fuller account of Him was reserved for a later stage of Christian instruction. We are taught afterwards by Him and his Apostles that God was with Him in a far different manner from that in which He was with the Prophets and other holy men, since the Son is One with the Father, who has ordained that "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." And the Holy Spirit, with which Peter tells us He was anointed, is elsewhere called "the Spirit of Christ" by Paul; who also declares that "the Lord" (*i. e.* the Lord Jesus) "is the Spirit;"* and that "in Him dwelleth all the Fulness† of the Godhead."

* 2 Cor. iii. 17, not, "that Spirit," as in our version.

† This word Fulness appears to have been employed, as it is repeatedly, by the Apostles, in reference to the use made of

Now those before whom such further and fuller instruction has been laid, are thus placed in a far different situation from those who had been taught only the introductory elements. These persons, if they at first understood, as was probably the case, no more than that Jesus was a man sent from God, were not in danger of being misled by that incomplete notion, provided they held themselves ready to receive such further knowledge as might be afforded them. Their faith, in the meantime, would have been both well-grounded and correct, as far as it went. But those who reject, or try to explain away the further declarations of Scripture, are in great danger of losing, if they proceed consistently, even that portion of faith which those early disciples had attained. For, suppose that, finding it difficult to conceive how

it by some of those early heretics, called Gnostics, who denoted by that term the Divine Being Himself, from whom, according to their wild and rash philosophy, certain Beings, to which they gave the name of Æons (literally Ages or Generations), had successively emanated; one of which, they pretended, had assumed human nature in Jesus Christ. It was, probably, in designed contradiction to this, that the Apostle asserts the indwelling in Jesus of "all the Fulness of the Godhead."

the Divine nature and the Human could be confined in Christ, we resolve not to believe the doctrine: can we, *then*, hold fast the same faith which, for a time at least, was held by the first disciples? Not so: for since Jesus and his Apostles evidently did use such language as, in its plain and obvious sense, to men of ordinary understanding, in those days, conveyed, and could not but convey, the notion of his being much more than a great prophet,—of his being the object of divine worship, it follows that if that be an incorrect notion, they were misleading their hearers into superstition and idolatry. We must, therefore, go a step lower, and admit that they had not such prophetic wisdom as to foresee and guard against this consequence: they could not, in short, have been divinely inspired in their declaration of the religion they taught. But we cannot stop even here: we must go a step lower still: for since they evidently *pretended* to inspiration, and professed to work miracles in attestation of their delivering a revelation from God Himself, it follows, that if these pretensions were unfounded, they could not have been even wise

and good men, but the weakest of enthusiasts, or the most impious impostors. So that we must, if we proceed with any consistency, abandon, step by step, every portion of Christian faith, unless we are prepared to receive in humility the whole of the instruction afforded by Scripture, just as we find it given; without being disgusted at finding it at variance with our preconceived notions, and too dimly and imperfectly set forth to be fully comprehended by us.

More *distinct* notions, indeed, might perhaps have been conveyed to our minds, had our Lord and his Apostles kept constantly to *one* form of expression, when speaking of the doctrines now before us, and had avoided all such phrases as could possibly appear to contradict each other: more distinct, I say, and precise notions might thus have been conveyed; but doubtless they would have been, in the very same degree, less *correct*. We should have avoided perplexity, at the expense of falling into error, by forming false theories. For, the very indistinctness complained of, springs from, and is suitable to, the nature of a subject which is so much beyond the

full comprehension of the human mind, that perfectly *clear* ideas of it must be incorrect and erroneous ideas. And those very seeming contradictions are (as I have just remarked) the means employed, and the very best that could have been employed, to convey, to us (if we are but careful to explain each passage by the rest, and so that they can be *reconciled* together) such knowledge on the subject as was requisite for us, and attainable by us. For in an attempt, for instance, to convey to a blind man some notion of sight, whenever we are compelled to employ very general expressions,* and call in the aid of metaphors, analogies, and resemblances to things known, for the sake of explaining what is unknown, the more numerous and *various* are the comparisons and analogies employed, the better; because we are thus guarded against carrying any one of them too far, and understanding it too literally. And while each illustration employed serves to explain, one, one portion, and another, another, of the subject (like different views taken of any natural

* See Essay vii. Second Series.

scene, drawn from different points around it), each of these serves to explain and modify the rest.

But all the Scripture-representations of God will leave nothing but perplexity, doubt, and confusion, in the mind of those who strive for a clear comprehension of—that which the Scriptures touch upon only incidentally and obscurely—the nature of the Supreme Being in Himself, and the relations of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit *to each other;* instead of dwelling on—that which the Scriptures so strongly put forward and enlarge upon—the relations in which God stands to Man, and the corresponding duties and hopes that pertain to ourselves. Religion, properly so called, does not consist in the knowledge of human nature in itself, or of the divine nature in itself;—which are more properly called metaphysical and theological philosophy;—but in the knowledge,—and practical application of that knowledge,—of God in *relation* to Man, and Man in relation to God. Fully and clearly is God set forth in Scripture as our Creator,—our Governor,—our Lawgiver,—our Judge,—the "rewarder

of them that diligently seek Him,—and the punisher of the wicked; all these express relations in which He stands to us; which call for corresponding feelings and conduct in ourselves. And so also, in respect of the doctrine of the Trinity, (which too many well-disposed Christians studiously and habitually withdraw their thoughts from, as a perplexing and barren speculation,) what the Scriptures chiefly inculcate and dwell on concerning it, is no matter of mere speculation, but has reference to *us*, and practically concerns us. Since God is our Father, as well as, in some sense, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must remember that we are his children; "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" by adoption: as He is our Redeemer "in Christ,* reconciling the world unto Himself," we are his redeemed People, purchased to Himself for his service; and as He is the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier, we must consider ourselves as being (as the Apostle Paul teaches us) "the Temple of the Holy Ghost which

* Rom. viii. 17.

dwelleth in us;" remembering that "if any one defile the Temple of God, him will God destroy."

By dwelling on the practical views which Scripture thus presents to us of these doctrines, and remembering the "three-fold duties it inculcates to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively, while we remember also how earnestly it dwells on the strict numerical unity of the great Being who has thus manifested Himself to us, we shall be taking the best means to understand, without error or perplexity, what is to be understood by Man, of the practically-important doctrines of Scripture; which we shall therefore be applying to the great purpose for which Scripture was given to us,—which is, to labour, through divine aid, to become worthy of our Christian calling, and to live and feel as it becomes those to do who have been made members of the Christian Church,—by being "baptized into the name" (*i. e.* enlisted into the service,—enrolled as the subjects) of Him who has thus declared Himself to us.

If there be any doctrine revealed in Scripture

that is purely speculative,* and is merely to be assented to by the understanding, without exercising any influence on our life, *this* at least is not such; but is set forth in Scripture as the foundation of the Christian faith, and hope, and love. If you merely assent to it as an abstract proposition, your belief is but that of the "Demons who believe, and tremble:" but if you so act upon it as always to keep before you in heart and in life, the threefold relation in which you stand to God, you will do and be what He requires, in this world, and will inherit in the next world all that He has promised: You will find in Him a Father, a Saviour, and a Comforter, now and for ever.

* See Essay iv. First Series.

SERMON IX.

JOHN II. 1.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there.

THIS, the first of all the miracles that our Lord wrought, is, on that account, and for other still more important reasons, deserving of a fuller attention than is usually bestowed on it; especially as its true character and design is, I think, in general, not rightly understood.

I propose accordingly, on the present occasion, to offer some remarks on this "beginning of miracles," with a view to point out and explain its intimate connexion with the whole scheme of evangelical truth. But the passage before us is also worthy of especial notice, as one of the *few* in which mention is made of the

mother of Jesus: and as it is at this season* that the Church calls our attention to the first remarkable passage of her life, I will, before entering on the consideration of the miracle at Cana, offer a few short observations on this and the other passages which allude to the blessed virgin.

That the allusions to her in the sacred writers should be so few and scanty, and should be of such a character as they are, is a circumstance which you will be the more struck with the more you consider the subject; and which you will perceive, on attentive reflection, involves very important consequences.

It will occur to you, on a moment's consideration, that if the New Testament writers had composed their works as mere human authors would have been likely to do, they would have enlarged very much on many points, which they have, in fact, either wholly omitted, or touched on but very slightly. Nothing could have been more interesting to the curiosity of their readers than the most minute details of

* This Sermon was delivered on Lady-day.

every thing relating to the life of their great Master, however little connected with his *ministry*;—such as his personal appearance—his domestic habits in private life—and all particulars relative to his family; all which would, if described in detail, have been most eagerly perused, at least by all who had any veneration for Him. We know how gratifying to most readers are all, even the most minute, anecdotes, relating to any very illustrious character. Yet of all this we find little or no notice in the Evangelists. And as all particulars relative to the parentage and family-connexions of any illustrious person are in general anxiously sought after by his admirers, so, in the present case more especially, any thing concerning her who was the only earthly parent of Jesus, and his parent in a miraculous manner, must have been doubly interesting to his disciples.

Nor are we in this point left to conjecture alone. There are now extant certain spurious works, of great antiquity, but which were never received by any church as Scripture, which bear the names, mostly, of some of our sacred writers, and which appear to have been forged

expressly with a view to the gratification, in weak and credulous minds, of that kind of curiosity to which I have alluded. One of them in particular, entitled the "Gospel of the Infancy," is filled with fabulous legends respecting the childhood of Jesus, and the life of his virgin-mother. Nothing can be more groundless, absurd, and improbable, than the greater part of what is related in these books; but they are curious and valuable from the contrast they present to the genuine Scriptures. They serve to shew what we might naturally expect would have been written by authors seeking to gratify the curiosity of their readers. Not that it would have been natural for the Evangelists (supposing them honest men) to have compiled a string of marvellous *fictions*, such as those I have alluded to; but it *would* have been natural for them to record every thing *true*, as far as they knew it, respecting persons in whom their readers must have been deeply interested.

Yet concerning the Virgin Mary, for instance, how little is recorded; and that little, how different from what we might have expected! None of the sacred writers, except the Evan-

gelists, ever mention her at all; and of these, two of the four do not even record the miraculous conception. One of them, John, her adopted son, though in all likelihood he must have long outlived her, does not record her death, nor give any particulars of her life; and yet he wrote, as is universally believed, purposely to supply the omissions of the other Evangelists. And it is remarkable that we gather from him *incidentally*, and only *incidentally*, that Mary had usually resided with Jesus, who, at his death, committed her to the care of the beloved disciple; and "from that time he took her to his home." Why this sparing and unfrequent mention of her whom "all generations should call blessed," and who must have been personally so well-known to many of the most eminent disciples?

Humanly speaking, this seems to me impossible. I am left,—I am driven, to suppose that the divine Spirit which guided the sacred writers, led them, whether consciously or unconsciously, to suppress what they would naturally have recorded, in order to guard against that superstitious veneration for the Virgin

Mary, to which, as experience shews, there is naturally so strong a tendency in the minds of Christians. What, if all the legends that exist about the parentage, birth, infancy, habitation, and private life, of the blessed Virgin,—what, if all these had been recorded in the sacred books,—had been a part of *Scripture?* We see what results these have led to, as it is; blessed be the divine goodness which has guarded against these all who will closely adhere to the Scriptures! And praised be the superhuman wisdom which in furnishing this safeguard, has proved the divine origin of those Scriptures, in omitting so much that mere human writers would have been sure to insert.*

The few passages in the Evangelists which do allude to the Virgin Mary furnish a strong confirmation of what has been just observed. They are chiefly such as are calculated, and apparently designed, to repress superstitious veneration. One of them records that, when the mother and other kindred of our Lord were

* See Essay vi. First Series: "Omissions of Scripture."

announced as desiring to speak with Him, He took occasion to point out that these had no claim, on that ground, to especial reverence; "He turned to his *disciples*, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" Each one of us, my Christian friends, may claim equal kindred with the blessed Jesus: if *any one* will hear his word, and keep it, "the same," said He, "is my mother, and sister, and brother." Again, in the Gospel appointed for this Sunday, when a woman exclaimed — "Blessed is the womb that bear Thee, and the paps that Thou hast sucked"— He replied, "Yea, *rather* blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." One of those who *did so*, was, we may be sure, his mother herself; but the mere circumstance of her being *his mother*, did not, as He declares, imply a blessedness equal to that of the humblest of his faithful hearers. Does not the record of *these* allusions to one of whom so little is recorded, seem expressly designed to guard against that superstitious error to which the tendency is so natural, and, as experience has shewn, so strong?

Once more: it is mentioned in the narrative

now before us, that the mother of Jesus was invited, as well as Himself and his disciples, to the marriage-feast at Cana. She seems to have been apprised of his design to perform the miracle; for she applied to Him when the wine was deficient. His answer has not that roughness indeed which our English translation gives it, from the use of the term "woman." The word in the original is one which denotes no disrespect; being found in the classical Greek writers applied even to a queen. But He plainly forbids her interference; telling her that the time is not yet come for the display of his miraculous power. Now why is her application to Him, and his reply,—why is even her presence on the occasion at all,—mentioned in this place? Evidently, for the purpose of shewing that He would *do no miracle at her bidding*;—that his filial reverence did not extend to his admitting her interference in any thing connected with his ministry. It is a warning to all who *will* be warned by Scripture, that they must not be led by their veneration for the Mother of Jesus, to look for her intercession for them with her Son. "There is one Mediator

between God and Man,"—Jesus Christ—between Him and Man—none. He is Himself ever at hand; and if any man will seek to do his will, "He will come unto him, and make his abode in him," by his Spirit.

I will now proceed to offer a few remarks on the miracle recorded in the narrative before us.

That which our Lord wrought on this occasion, was, we are told, "the beginning of miracles,"—by which He "manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on Him;"—*i. e.* were now fully convinced of his coming from God; having at first been induced so far to become his disciples, as to listen to Him, only from the testimony of John the Baptist, who had pointed Him out to them as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." We should naturally, therefore, be prepared to expect that the opening of his divine commission,—the first manifestation of his power,—the first public act of his ministry, should be one not of the least significant or remarkable of all his mighty works.

Before, however, I proceed to speak of the

particulars of this miracle, it is important to lay down some principles which are not always sufficiently attended to, relative to our Lord's miracles in general. There are three distinct purposes which they were designed to answer;— and by far the greater part of them were calculated for all three of these purposes at once. The first and most important object of our Lord's mighty works is that which every one perceives, viz. to prove his divine authority, by manifesting power more than human, and such as plainly shewed that God was with Him: this, I say, was the most important object of his miracles, because without such a proof as this, men could have had no sufficient grounds for believing on Him. Besides this, however, a second object was proposed in most of his miracles; viz. the immediate relief or benefit of the persons for whom they were wrought; as was the case in those numerous instances of his healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and feeding the multitude in the desert.

The third object of almost all our Lord's miracles was to convey some figurative representation of his character and office,— to exhibit some

emblem or token of the Gospel and its effects;—in short, as I may say, to *act* a Parable. Most of the miracles are explained by Him as having this instructive meaning. And you should remember that an interpretation of *actions* as symbolical, *i. e.* as conveying an instructive meaning, is (in Scripture), so far from being a fanciful departure from the plain literal sense of what we find there, that it is, in fact, *keeping to the established meaning* of the language ordinarily employed by the sacred writers. To speak by significant *actions*, may be called a part of the language of the Prophets and other sacred writers, with which, of course, the Jews were familiar. For instance, the prophecy to Jeroboam, that he should be king of ten tribes, was conveyed to him by a prophet's tearing his garment into twelve pieces, and giving him ten of them. And the Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in particular, were prophesying during great part of their lives more by symbolical actions than by words; as by wearing a yoke, to represent the captivity of the Jews,—making a symbolical representation of the siege of Jerulem, &c.

Thus also Jesus instructs his disciples in humility, by placing a little child in the midst of them, and by washing their feet. And He points out the figurative meaning of many of his own miracles, as in giving sight to the blind, thus denoting that He came to enlighten men's minds by the Gospel; — in the miraculous draught of fish, signifying that the Apostles should be fishers of men, &c.

Now, the *first* miracle our Lord performed might be expected more especially to answer this purpose in a high degree, and to have a more extensive and important signification than any of the rest; since it would thus form a more suitable opening of his ministry, and introduction, as it were, to the rest of his mighty works. Not that this mystical meaning was expected or intended by Him to be understood *at the time*, by those who were witnesses of the miracle; but that the truth might afterwards break upon them, when they should come to perceive the true nature and design of his office. Indeed, it is often remarked by the Evangelists, that the disciples did not, at the time, understand what his meaning was; but "after that

Jesus was risen from the dead, then understood they these things."

Jesus Christ came into the world to fulfil the Law and the Prophets: to offer up Himself,—in a manner we cannot explain, but which is fully declared to us in Scripture,—to offer up "Himself without spot to God," as a mysterious sacrifice for the redemption of the world: thereby accomplishing those prophecies, and explaining those types, of the Mosaic Law, which had a reference to that great work; and thus bringing to a close the old dispensation, so as to abolish the ceremonies which had then sufficiently answered their purpose, and to substitute for them the new dispensation of the Gospel, of which the other was a shadow, even the spiritual kingdom of heaven, which He had proclaimed as *at hand*. This, the great object of his coming among us, the miracle at Cana of Galilee was, I am convinced, intended to signify and represent: as, indeed, we might have expected of his *opening* miracle, that it should be not merely, like the rest, significant of some *particular* doctrine, but *generally* expressive of his *whole* Gospel.

In order to perceive this mystical signification, you must consider attentively both the circumstances of the miracle itself, and also several other circumstances in the life and death of Jesus, and in the expressions used by Himself and his Apostles relative to those events.

And first, with respect to the miracle itself, you will observe that several seemingly minute particulars of the transaction are recorded; doubtless not without reason. In a different kind of history indeed, such as many that are extant of the lives of eminent men, entering very much at length into all particulars, we should naturally, and justly, regard any very minute circumstances that are related, as of small consequence. But it is otherwise (and this is most important to be always kept in mind in studying the four Gospels) in the case of such very scanty and brief *selections*, as we find recorded in these histories. I say, "selections," because it is plain that a very small portion only of our Lord's discourses,—of his miracles,—and of all the transactions of his life,—are singled out to be recorded; and a small part again of the *circumstances* even of these is related in the

history. Now the writers must have had some reason for selecting what they did select, out of the far larger mass which they omitted. For all that they do record could not, if put together, have occupied as many *days* as his ministry did months; and John remarks, "that there are many other things also which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." Every thing, therefore, which they do relate is worthy of a close attention, however seemingly insignificant; from its being judged worthy of being recorded (for some reason or other) by writers who are on the whole so scanty and concise.

You will observe, then, in the first place, that the water-pots which our Lord commanded to be filled up, and from which the guests were afterwards supplied with wine, were placed there, as John tells us, "after the manner of the purifying of the Jews," *i. e.* for the guests to wash, according to their ceremonial observances of purification, which were necessary to free them from legal uncleanness. These ceremonial purifications they had multiplied, indeed, by

their traditions, beyond what the divine law enjoined; but there were many occasions, such as those of legal pollution, contracted by the touch of a dead body, or of the carcase of any unclean beast, and several others, which required them, in conformity with the Law of Moses, to employ washing as the appointed means of freeing them from the impurity: water having been doubtless chosen as the outward symbol of inward purity of heart, and rejection of sin, which defiles the inward man, and of which the external bodily defilement is to be considered as the figure and representative. Accordingly the Apostle Paul, speaking of the Jewish purifications and atonements, and of their reference to that of which they were the shadows,—the real and efficacious purification through the sacrifice of Christ,—calls them "carnal ordinances," *i. e.* such as are outward, visible, and applied to the body; consisting, he says, "in meats, and drinks, and divers *washings*, which could not make the worshippers perfect as pertaining to the conscience;" *i. e.* could only give that outward legal purity which allowed them to join in the public worship.

But "if," says he, "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works,* to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 14.)

Now it is to be observed, I say, that the water which our Lord converted into wine, was put into those water-pots which were designed for the purpose of ceremonial purification by washing, according to the rites of the Jewish religion. He might, of course, as easily, after having directed the servants to bring water in their other vessels, have converted *that*, at once, into wine, and sent it to the governor of the feast. But He commanded them to fill with the water *these* water-pots of purification, and from *them* to draw out and present to the governor of the feast the liquor which was now made wine. Doubtless this particular mode of performing the miracle was adopted by Jesus, and

* That is, sins. See Heb. vi. 1.; Col. ii. 13.; and Eph. ii. 1—3.

was recorded by John, not accidentally, but for some good and sufficient reason. And doubtless his purpose was, to indicate that He was come to *substitute the Gospel* for the Law;—to do away the Old Dispensation of outward ceremonial cleansings, and to put in their place the true atonement and expiation of his great sacrifice which "taketh away the sins of the world." For, as the water which was placed in vessels intended for purification, was aptly chosen by Him to represent the whole of the ceremonial law, so it is to be observed in the next place, that wine, into which the water was changed, represented the blood of Christ, being the symbol of it which He Himself appointed at the last supper; saying, as he gave the cup to his disciples, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many." And also in John's Gospel, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" signifying by this, as he tells us, his *life*, which He offered up for the redemption of the world. "For the *blood*," says Moses, "is the *life*; and I have given it upon the altar to be an atonement for your souls;" *i. e.* for your lives: the

blood being the symbol of life. And thus too Paul: "The cup which we bless is it not the communion" (*i. e.* joint participation) "of the blood of Christ?"

The allusions accordingly in the writers of the New Testament to the purifying and sanctifying influence of the blood of Christ, on all who have a lively faith in Him, are innumerable. Peter, in the opening of his first Epistle, addresses Christians as "elect" (*i. e.* chosen), through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" *sprinkling* being one of the modes of purification under the law. "If we walk in the light," says John, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." And the same Apostle, in the Book of Revelation, was told concerning the blessed whom he saw in his vision clothed in white robes, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

These and many other passages to the same effect will convince any one who considers them with attention and with candour, that Jesus had in view that mystical signification which has

been just laid before you, in changing that water which was the symbol of some of the legal purifications under the Old Covenant, into the wine which He afterwards ordained to be the symbol of his purifying blood of the New Testament.

It is also to be particularly observed, that Jesus did not (as He might have done) cause wine to appear in vessels which were *empty*, nor direct that the water should be cast away, and then replenish the vessels with wine; but He *changed* the water into wine. This circumstance also is not without its meaning: it indicates that "He came not" (as He Himself tells us) "to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them:" He did not *cast away* and abolish, as something evil in itself, or wanting in divine authority, the system of Jewish rites and sacrifices; but He *changed* them for that which they signified and fore-shewed, — even the Gospel. He substituted the substance for the shadow, and brought the types to an end by putting in their stead the thing typified; "the blood," as Paul expresses it, "of the *everlasting* covenant;" *i. e.* of that which was not, like the Mosaic, to come to an end, and be superseded

by another, but was to last for ever. Accordingly, since "the Law," as Paul says, "is holy, and just, and good,"—since the Mosaic rites and ceremonies were truly of divine institution, and were therefore not meant to be set at nought, but were brought to a close only by their fulfilment under the more glorious dispensation of the Gospel (even as the flower is in due time succeeded by the fruit);—this being so, it was fitting that what was chosen as the representative of the Jewish Law, should not be any thing of a vile or impure nature, though it were changed,—and changed for something more precious. And accordingly the water on which Christ wrought this miraculous change, is a thing which is clear indeed, and pure, and wholesome; but was converted into wine, which is invigorating and refreshing, and which was therefore ordained by our Lord as a token, a pledge, and a means of receiving, the spiritual benefit of his sacrifice: the "inward part or thing signified" in the Lord's Supper, being (to use the words of our Catechism) "the strengthening and refreshing of the soul, by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine."

Moreover, it is to be observed, that the introduction of a change of the Mosaic Law for something better, was not only a thing unexpected, but unacceptable, and matter of offense to the Jews. That Law, though holy and of divine appointment, and having "a shadow of good things to come," was, as has been just remarked, far inferior to the glorious reality of those good things,—the Gospel-dispensation, which was substituted for it. But this was one of the doctrines which the Jews had the greatest difficulty in receiving; and, indeed, their rejection of Christianity seems to have proceeded in great measure from their extreme unwillingness to admit that the Mosaic Law was only a temporary institution, and was to give place to something far more excellent: though this was plainly declared by their Prophets. And accordingly the unbelieving Jews of the present day, though professing to look for the Messiah foretold by the Prophets, yet will not admit that He is to abolish or to alter any part of the ceremonial law, but, on the contrary, make it a fundamental article of their faith, that the institutions of Moses are to remain in force to the end of

the world. This circumstance, therefore, in our Lord's doctrine, so unacceptable to the bigoted Jew,—the reservation of the more glorious dispensation and brighter revelation of God's will for the time of Christ's own coming, was not left unnoticed among the significant circumstances which accompanied this remarkable miracle. It was indicated in the unconscious expression of surprise from the governor of the feast; "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast *kept the good wine until now.*" Thus testifying in the mystical signification (not understood by himself) of his own words, that *that* was best which had been reserved for the last, and that it was a *matter of wonder* that it should be so.

Another cause for our Lord's thus, as it were, sanctifying water by the miracle which He performed upon it, was, I conceive, an intended reference to the other sacrament,—that of Baptism, which He instituted, and of which He ordained water to be the outward symbol. The water of purification at the marriage feast He converted into wine, the appointed symbol of his blood, to

indicate that the water of baptism also shall spiritually undergo the same change;—that the outward sprinkling at that sacrament represents the washing, as Peter says, "of regeneration," and shall be accompanied, if we are not wanting to ourselves, with the "sprinkling of the heart from an evil conscience,"—with the inward and spiritual purification of the blood of Christ —the sanctification of his Spirit bestowed through his meritorious sacrifice. The symbols of both our Lord's Sacraments were present on the occasion of this his first miracle—water, in which He Himself had just before been baptized, and which He chose as the emblem of the spiritual cleansing and purifying efficacy of the Holy Spirit (as was indicated by the visible appearance of the Spirit descending on Him on that occasion), and *wine*, the appointed emblem of his blood; and into which the water was changed, to point out that it is through his Sacrifice that we are made partakers of the spiritual purification which Baptism denotes. It is also to be observed, that it is by baptism we are admitted to be partakers of his atoning blood; in like manner as it was *from* the water that the

wine (the symbol of his blood) was produced. And I cannot but think that John, the very Evangelist who records the miracle at Cana, had a reference to this transaction, when he says, in his first Epistle, "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water alone, but by water and blood."

There can be no doubt, I think, that John in the passage just mentioned of his Epistle, was referring in his own mind to this circumstance, which he afterwards (for the Epistle was the first written) recorded in his Gospel history; and which he evidently considered as something highly interesting, important, and significant. He, alone of all the Evangelists, mentions in his Gospel an appearance which took place at our Lord's crucifixion; "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water: and he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe."

If you consider and compare together these two passages, and also the account of the miracle at Cana, all in the same writer, you will

perceive, I think, that he must have had in his mind the connexion of the water of Baptism with the efficacy of Christ's death; for this was indicated (as he seems to imply) by the mixture of water and blood which flowed from his side; and it was also, I think, foreshewn by his converting water, the outward sign at Baptism, into wine, the sign at the other Sacrament, and the representation of his precious blood. This accordingly is alluded to by our Church in her baptismal service: viz. our Lord's "shedding from his precious side both water and blood."

And it should be remarked that it is the same Evangelist who records both these transactions, the one at the beginning, the other at the end, of our Lord's ministry.

The last circumstance which I shall notice relative to this miracle, is that of its being performed at a *Marriage*-feast. This was, indeed, a suitable occasion, on account of the concourse of guests, for our Lord to manifest his power, and prove his divine mission; which was the only *immediate* purpose of the miracle. But as there was another purpose to be answered by

that miracle, when the events of his life and death should have unfolded the spiritual signification of it, so it is probable that the occasion itself also partook of that spiritual signification. For when we plainly find that the *whole* transaction calls for a figurative interpretation, it will *then* be reasonable to apply that interpretation to many of the particulars of it, such as we should *not* be authorized so to explain, if they stood alone, or occurred in a transaction of a different nature.

You are to observe, then, that there are in the sacred writers perpetual allusions to the union between Christ and his Church (that Spiritual Society which He founded and of which He is the Head), under the figure of a marriage; to denote the affectionate regard which He bears towards this his spouse, his watchful protection, and constant presence with her ("lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"), and also the spotless purity and devoted love which He looks for from her. He accordingly in many of his parables alludes to Himself under the character of a Bridegroom: and often describes the Kingdom of

Heaven by the parable of a wedding feast. And there can be no doubt, I think, that in so doing He alluded to this his mystical union with the Church; which was to be, afterwards, by his Apostles, so strongly dwelt upon, and set forth under that figure. "Let us be glad and rejoice," says John, in the Revelations (the very Apostle who records the marriage at Cana), "and give thanks to Him: for the *marriage* of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready; and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Christians, *i. e.* members of his Church); "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb." This Church our Lord is represented by Paul as purifying to Himself through the grace of Baptism; *that* being the Sacrament which admits members into that society. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands,"—"husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the

Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." And again (in the Epistle to the Colossians), "He is the head of the body, the Church;"—and on departing from Ephesus, he charges the elders there "to feed the Church of Christ, which He hath purchased with his own blood."

These, and innumerable other passages of the like import, and full of the same allusions, if considered in conjunction with each other, and with those circumstances of this miracle which have been already treated of, will convince you that it is more than probable our Lord had in view when He chose a marriage-feast for the scene of this most significant miracle, his own marriage with the Church, which He "purchased for Himself," and sanctified with his own blood. And this accordingly is alluded to in the marriage-service of our Church.

Observe, then, it was at a *marriage*-feast that the *water* which represented both the Mosaic

purifications, and that of Baptism afterwards instituted, was changed into *wine*, the chosen symbol of Christ's blood; through the efficacy of which He redeemed and purified to Himself, the Church, his spouse; with whom hereafter, in her glorified and triumphant state in Heaven, He will celebrate anew his mystical union, according to the vision seen by John in the Revelations. It was natural, therefore, that the nature of his Gospel should be first set forth, and the means of redemption prefigured, on the occasion of a marriage, which was the chosen emblem of that his union with the Church He was about to found.

If all the circumstances, then, of this miracle are considered, not merely one by one, but in conjunction, they will leave no doubt on any candid mind that the transaction is to be understood figuratively, in some such way as I have endeavoured to explain it to you. I have not, however, you will observe, built on this explanation any *new* doctrine,—any which is not abundantly taught by many other passages of Scripture. But those passages, and the present, as now explained, when thus placed side by

side, serve mutually to throw light on each other; and thus they afford us some advantage over those who were eye-witnesses of the miracles; and even counterbalance the advantages which in that circumstance they had over us. For though they saw the proof which this miracle gave of Christ's divine power, its figurative signification (as I have already remarked) was not understood at the time, but shone forth afterwards to enlighten the disciples in due season. And this may serve to confirm our faith, and to delight us by a view of the admirable harmony and agreement of parts in the whole of the Gospel scheme; whose beauties shine brighter and more glorious the longer and more studiously we gaze on them.

Remember, therefore, when next you see the sacramental cup filled for you, in commemoration of Christ's death, and according to his holy Institution, that He deigned to sanctify that fruit of the vine, not only in the *last* (before He suffered), but in the *first* remarkable manifestation of Himself to his disciples. And remember that He who once changed the water into wine, literally, is able and is ready now, by an inward

and spiritual working of the same divine power, to change the outward sign of partaking of this cup, into the partaking of his atoning sacrifice, and receiving of his Holy Spirit into your soul, of which spirit his flesh and blood are themselves the sign; for "it is the Spirit," says He, "that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing." Take heed, therefore, that you neglect not so great a benefit: nor be so unthankful for it, as to be unmindful of the conditions of receiving it; which are, "to love Him who hath first loved us," and to show that love in the way He required, by keeping his commandments.

And one of these commandments is that of celebrating his holy communion as He has enjoined us. If the servants at the feast in Cana had disregarded his directions as unreasonable, or unimportant, they could have had no ground for expecting Him to perform his mighty work. Nor can we, if we disregard any of his injunctions, whether we understand the reason of them or not, have any claim to his offered mercies.

Apply therefore to yourselves, my brethren, the directions which the blessed Mother of

Jesus gave to the servants; "Whatsoever," said she, "He saith unto you, do it." So, and only so, shall you partake with her the blessing of being reckoned among his kindred! When you behold Him (as all men one day must, whether they will or no), may you hear those gracious words addressed by Him to you; "Behold my mother and my brethren! for he that heareth the word of God, and doeth it, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother."

SERMON X.

JOHN VI. 51.

I am the bread that came down from Heaven.

THE discourse of our Lord which is now before us, follows immediately the narrative of the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves, and has an evident reference to that miracle.

I took occasion lately to remark * to you that there is one point of view in which most, if not all of his miracles ought to be contemplated, but which is often passed over: I mean, their *instructive* character. They may be regarded, as I then remarked, as a kind of *acted Parables;* designed to convey to us some figurative and

* See preceding Sermon.

emblematical representation of the Gospel-doctrines. In opening the eyes of the blind, healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out demons,*—in all these—besides the proof thus afforded of his divine mission, and the immediate benefit to the persons relieved—He represents his spiritual agency in enlightening the mind, and curing the diseases of the soul, and overthrowing the dominion of Satan, and procuring immortal life for his disciples.† And in his first miracle, that at the marriage of Cana, He prefigures the change from the Levitical Law to the Gospel.

So, also, the miracle of the loaves was designed, I have no doubt, to give a representation of Christ as the spiritual "bread that came down from heaven:" and as being Himself the

* I have preferred this, the more literal rendering of the word δαιμόνια, to that in our version, for the sake of avoiding an ambiguity, which, I think, has led to hurtful results. The word Diabolos, which is translated Devil (or rather, retained untranslated; for it is the same word, only altered in its transference from one language to another), is in reality a *proper name* or title, of Satan, the prince of demons; and consequently it should never be used in the plural number.

† See John xi. 25, 26.

fulfilment of the type of that bread with which God has formerly fed his people in the wilderness. "Your fathers," said He, "did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead; this is the bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die."

On the nature then of that type I propose now to offer some observations, which may throw light on a subject not in general sufficiently attended to by readers of Scripture,—the connexion of the Old Testament with the New, and the explanation afforded of the Gospel-dispensation, by the Mosaic. The one does not merely *contain* types, figures, shadows of the other, but consists almost entirely of them, and was principally designed as a forerunner of the Christian scheme. And parts of the Mosaic Law which, even at the time that was delivered, answered important purposes, had yet, beyond these, a reference also to something still more important that was to come.

Thus, for instance, the miraculous supply of manna to the Israelites in the wilderness, did, indeed, answer the purpose of relieving their present wants, in such a way as to show them that

they were under the immediate and extraordinary care of the Lord: but it was also, besides this, a type of another and far more important supply which was to come, for the relief of far more important wants. Our Lord plainly declares in the passage from which my text is taken, that He Himself was signified and prefigured by this manna,—this "bread which came down from heaven" to feed the Israelites in the wilderness. That wilderness is, I conceive, to be understood as a representation of this present world; through which the Christian is travelling to his place of rest, the promised land of glory, which answers to the land of Canaan. In this he is tried, as the Israelites were, to see whether they would obey God's commandments, and prove fit to "enter into his rest." In that wilderness (which was barren and unfit to support their lives) God's extraordinary providence supported them by means of the supply of manna; to which our Lord compares Himself, as affording a corresponding support to the Christian in his journey through this world. The resemblance then, or analogy between these two things,—between the type and that which is signified,—

consists in this; that both were designed to afford support to man, and both, *such* support as he could not do without, nor supply himself with, by any natural means; both proceeded immediately from the merciful gift of God; and both were intended not only for man's *present* relief, but to sustain him on a *journey* to a glorious promised inheritance. The difference, again, between the two consists in this: that the manna supported the *natural* life of the Israelites, and Christ—that is, the Spirit of Christ—for "it is the Spirit," said He, "that giveth life (quickeneth), the flesh profiteth nothing,"—is the support of our spiritual life; the one sustained and nourished the body, the other the soul; the one, accordingly, was the object of the senses; the other is only perceived and understood by the mind: the one supported the Israelites in their passage to an earthly resting place; the other leads the Christian to an eternal inheritance beyond the grave.

These distinctions, and these resemblances, were pointed out by our Lord Himself, in the discourse before us, when He calls Himself "the bread that came down from Heaven," and says,

that "unless they eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, they have no life in them."

He explains, at the same time, that it is not the sustenance of man's natural and mortal life He is speaking of; but eternal life: "this," said He, "is the bread that came down from heaven,—not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." All this, however (we see), was unintelligible at the time to his hearers; who said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Now, that they should question or deny, as they did, the truth and reasonableness of any thing He told them, whatever it might be, was certainly unjustifiable. He had wrought so many miracles before them, that they ought to have been fully convinced of his coming from God, and consequently of the divine authority of whatever He said, however unintelligible it might appear to them; but that what He said *should be* unintelligible to them, at the time, is not at all to be wondered at. It was not then fully understood, nor meant to be so, even by

his own disciples; the great sacrifice of Himself on the cross, which He was referring to, not having been at that time accomplished, nor even looked for. And many other things were said by Him at various times, which were intended to be (as we are told they were) then only understood when all the work which He came to do was accomplished. He says on one occasion, "Now I tell you before it comes to pass, that when it cometh to pass, ye may believe that I am He;" and, in other places, we are told of things which his disciples understood not at the time, but which were recalled to their minds, "after that Jesus was risen from the dead;" and which that event explained to them.

And so it was, doubtless, with respect to those words of his which are now before us; the question, "How shall this Man give us his flesh to eat?" was solved, and the meaning of his being the bread that came down from heaven was explained to them when his great work was completed. As the bread from heaven signified the body of Christ, so his body—the "flesh and the blood of the Son of Man"—signified his life ("for the blood," says Moses "is the life").

which was offered up for our salvation, to atone for the sins of the world, and to redeem us from everlasting death. "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world;" and again, "It is the Spirit which quickeneth;" (*i. e.* gives life to the soul) "the flesh profiteth nothing."

And as the Israelites under the old dispensation could only be purified, and rendered acceptable in the sight of God, by the blood of the appointed sacrifices, which were figures of Christ, so the Christian's acceptance with God depends on his faith in the meritorious sacrifice of Christ; on his repenting and renouncing the sins from which Jesus came to save his people;—"having (as the Apostle expressed it) his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience" (in allusion to the ceremonial purification of the Jews by sprinkling)—on his devoting himself to the service of Christ, and walking in his steps (which Paul describes by the expression of "putting on Christ");—on his having the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him; (for "if any man," says Paul, "have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his")—and on his grateful love

toward Christ, and cheerful and zealous compliance with all his commandments; for "if ye love me," said He, "keep my commandments." Such an one is truly fed with the bread that came down from heaven, which alone can preserve his body and soul to everlasting life;—such an one belongs to Christ, who will be his support through this life, and will "raise him up" (as He hath said) "at the last day." And, surely, this is a most gracious and inestimably precious offer, considering that nothing we can do can in any degree merit such favour, and that we have but to apply for it in order to receive it; for "him that cometh unto me," says our Lord, in the same discourse, "I will in no wise cast out."

Considering what plain proofs our Lord had afforded to the Jews by his many wonderful works, that He was truly all that He professed to be, and was well able to make good his promises, it certainly is strange that many of them should be so perverse as not to believe in Him, and to "come unto Him that they might have life." It is strange, I say; but we could not call it incredible, nor even improbable, even if

we had not such positive authority, as we have, for the fact; because, unhappily, many in the present day,—many even of those who wonder at the unbelieving Jews, are guilty of a still more strange perversity. More strange, I say, because they do believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and yet will not come unto Him that they may have life,—will not accept his offers, and comply with the conditions of them,—the keeping of his commandments,—and yet profess to trust in the mercy of God, and to hope for eternal life at his hands.

The unbelieving Jews trusted in the mercy of God. And they had, so far, better ground for their trust, bad as it was, than disobedient Christians; inasmuch as the law of Moses, in which they trusted, was truly of divine appointment; though they sinned in rejecting the promised Messiah whom Moses had foretold, and for whose Gospel his Law was a temporary preparation. Whereas those Christians who profess to hope for God's mercy, while they fail to conform to that Gospel which they themselves know, and confess, to contain his promises

of it, are relying entirely on the devices of their own imaginations; and are so far in a worse condition even than the unbelieving Jews, that they bear witness against themselves, by admitting the divine authority even of the very commands they disobey.

But to proceed with my proposed explanation of our Lord's discourse: in the mention of his flesh and blood,—his use of that expression to signify the benefits to Christians of his death,—there is a plain allusion to the Sacrament of his Supper, which he appointed in commemoration of that great event, and as one of the means of grace, by which He thought fit to impart to the faithful a share of those benefits. He said to his disciples, "Take, eat; this is my body: this is my blood which is shed for you." And it is remarkable that John, who alone of all the Evangelists, has recorded that discourse of our Lord which is now before us, is the only one of them who does *not* record the institution of the communion; because he wrote principally to supply their deficiencies, and had no need to notice the institution of that ordinance which had been observed in all the Christian

Churches so many years (most likely near half a century) before he wrote his Gospel.

In order to understand rightly the character of this institution, we should keep in mind that, both among the Jewish and the heathen nations, it was customary, when a sacrifice was offered, for the worshippers to hold a feast on the flesh of it; which custom among the heathen Paul alludes to in his Epistle to the Corinthians, when he speaks of "eating meats offered to idols," and of being seen "sitting at meat in the idol's temple," as practices likely to scandalize their brethren; because, both among Jews and Pagans, the partaking of this feast was understood to signify a belief and confidence in the efficacy and virtue of the sacrifice, and a desire and trust to be admitted to a share in the benefits of it: so that, however the Corinthians might inwardly despise the idols of the Pagans, the outward reverence shown by partaking of these sacrifices would, at least, be likely to offend [scandalize] the weaker Christians. They knew, Paul tells them, that "what the Gentiles offered, they offered unto demons, and not to God;" *i. e.* not to the one true God. And he adds, "Ye

cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons;" thus indicating the correspondence between the commemoration of the Lord's Supper and the feasts or sacrifices held, both by the Pagan nations to their false gods, and by the Jews, to the Lord. The Lord's Supper is a feast on a sacrifice,—even the sacrifice once offered by Christ on the cross; and the words in which He instituted it, shew plainly that He was referring to the practice of partaking of the flesh of the victim. And as He speaks of his flesh and his blood to signify the benefits of his sacrifice, of which the bloody sacrifices of the Mosaic law had been signs and emblems, so He appointed as the sign again of that, his flesh and blood*, bread and wine, as

* "If we *could* actually receive into our mouths the very flesh and blood of Christ, this could not, *of itself*, be productive of any benefit to the soul: it might, if God willed it, be the appointed *token* and *means* of our receiving such benefit; even as the water of the pool of Siloam was, of restored sight; but it could not *itself* confer any spiritual advantage, any more than water could cure blindness. It must, therefore, after all, be in a spiritual and *figurative* sense that Christ says, 'My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;' if they *were* literally eaten and drunk, they must still be the sign of something else, represented and conveyed by them. So that

the two most important articles of subsistence in that age and country. And there is no doubt that, in the appointment of the bread, our Lord had also a reference to the miraculous supply of bread from heaven to the Israelites in the wilderness, which he spoke of in the discourse before us, and which was plainly a type of Him: and also that there was an allusion to his future

the violence done to Scripture and to reason, for the sake of avoiding a figurative interpretation, does not, after all, even accomplish that object.

"The error of transubstantiation, the English Church has guarded against most carefully, by declaring that the bread and wine remain unchanged,—that they are only a *sign* of Christ's body and blood,—and that it is only 'after a spiritual manner' that his body and blood are received by the faithful. But it would have been better, perhaps, to have added to this, for the benefit of the unlearned, a statement, that the bread and wine not only are *merely a sign*, but are a *sign of a sign*: i. e. that *they* represent our Lord's flesh and blood, and that his flesh and blood, again, are a sign of something else. This is indeed implied, when it is said, that Christ's body and blood are '*spiritually* received,' and that it 'strengthens and refreshes the *soul*;' for it is manifest that *literal*, *material*, flesh and blood cannot be *spiritually* received, or refresh the *soul*. But for the sake of avoiding those vague and confused ideas, which are apt to lead ultimately to the regarding of the Eucharist as a mere memorial, it might have been better to state distinctly what it is that the faithful communicants do really partake of."—*Essays. Second Series.* Appendix B.

appointment of the wine at his supper, in the first miracle He performed at Cana.

Our Lord's Supper, then, is not merely a solemn commemoration of his death, but it is also a spiritual feast upon a sacrifice,—even the sacrifice of Him, the spotless "Lamb of God,"—in partaking of which we acknowledge the efficacy of that, his atonement, and by faith are made partakers of his grace, through the symbols of bread and wine, which He appointed. This two-fold purpose of our Lord's institution is clearly pointed out in Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do *shew* the Lord's *death* until He come." And again: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the *blood* of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the *communion* of the *body* of Christ?" And in like manner our Lord's expression—"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day"—taken in conjunction with his words at the institution of this sacrament, "This is my body, which is given for you; this is my blood, which is shed for you,"—these two

passages, I say, taken together, plainly shew that the outward symbols which He appointed to be received are among the means of grace, through which He has thought fit to convey to his faithful servants the benefits of the offering of his body and blood.

I say *among* the means of grace, because, of course, we are not to suppose that our partaking of the Lord's Supper is the only thing intended by our eating the flesh of Christ. It is only one out of several things, all of which together are indispensable: we must "put on Christ," and be "fashioned after his likeness,"—we must live under the guidance of his Spirit;—we must "love Him who hath first loved us," and we must give proof of our love, as He has told us, by "keeping his commandments;" this, of celebrating his holy Supper among the rest.

It is, indeed, almost too plain to need mention, that if a man receives, however devoutly, the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper, if he take no pains to follow the other commands of his Lord,—to walk in his steps,—to be led by his Spirit,—to renounce sin, and to "walk worthy of his Christian vocation," he will receive no

advantage from having obeyed this one command and neglected the rest. To expect this, indeed, is, I conceive, not an error particularly common among us; though it was most lamentably so before the Reformation. But it is equally plain, on the other hand (though men are not equally apt to perceive and to understand it), that if a man be in other respects obedient to God's will, —if he were even far more perfect in every virtue than any one can, with truth, pretend to be,—yet if he neglected this one ordinance, he would stand condemned before God, as a disobedient subject of the Kingdom of Heaven. For the performance of a part of our duty can never be an excuse and atonement for the wilful omission and neglect of another part; since God, in whose sight nothing that we can do can have any merit in itself, and who surely has a full right to entire obedience, has commanded the one as much as the other.

No one can plead any excuse for his wilful neglect of this ordinance, that will stand before God's tribunal at the last day. If he says that he practises his other duties because he perceives the reasonableness of them, but that he cannot

understand why bread and wine should have any spiritual efficacy, that is as much as to say, that he will not take God's word for any thing;—that he has no trust in his express promises,—no respect for his positive commands,—but practises the duties he does practise, not out of reverence to God, but in compliance with his own reason, which he sets up to sit in judgment on each of God's commandments. Now such a principle as this plainly makes all his other apparent acts of goodness utterly worthless, since it proves that they do not spring from the only right principle—faith in God, and submission to his will. "Without faith," we are assured, "it is impossible to please God." Now he who believes only what he sees, and does only what his understanding pronounces to be reasonable in each particular point, has evidently no *faith*. For "faith is the evidence of things not seen." A man will believe his *neighbour*, so far as to do what the other tells him, if he plainly sees that it is for his own good. And if, therefore, he will not believe in the duty and in the efficacy of receiving the Lord's Supper on God's plain command and assurance, he has evidently no more faith

and trust in God than in one of his fellow-mortals.

And here it may be worth while to remark, that one mistake as to the real character of Christian faith, is often found to lead to another, of an opposite kind. There are some whose language goes to confound *faith* with blind *credulity*, and to declaim against the pride of Reason in such a style as to imply that religious faith is something opposed to reason, or at least, quite independent of it; and that it consists in giving implicit credence, without any grounds, to some person, or body of men, claiming authority to direct all others, and grounding their claim on nothing but vehement assertion, and vituperation of all who oppose them. But this is precisely what our Scriptures characterise as *want* of faith. It was the very course taken by the Jews who rejected Jesus. They relied implicitly on the authority of the priests and rulers, shutting their ears against evidence, and attributing, without reason, and against reason, our Lord's beneficent miracles to the agency of evil spirits. If faith consist in admitting the conclusions most opposite to reason, in blind deference to the authority

of their guides, these men must have possessed more faith than the Apostles. But the faith spoken of in Scripture is evidently founded on reason. It consists in examining candidly the evidence for any thing that professes to come from God; deciding what are really divine revelations, and submitting to be guided by these, even in particular points which may not be in themselves agreeable to our own reason.

And hence it is that, since true faith is founded on reason, some persons have supposed that we may put our own reason in the place of faith, and judge of each point proposed in a Divine revelation, as if it were the work of a mere fallible man, receiving or rejecting according as reason approves or disapproves. But this is, as I have said, a rejection of faith altogether. I have no *faith* in the writer of a mathematical treatise, even though I believe every one of his propositions to be true, from having *demonstrated each* of them myself; nor, in the author of a description of any country I am well acquainted with, if I have verified with my own eyes every thing he states. Nor would you be said to have faith in a physician, if you

should pursue the course he advised, from being yourself convinced, on *your own* medical knowledge, that his medicines were the best. You are then only said to have faith in a physician, when you follow his prescriptions without pretending to understand the reasons for them, or even to know what they are. And yet your faith in him may be, and ought to be, *founded in reason*; that is, you may have very sufficient reason for believing him to be a good physician, and trusting him accordingly.

But to return to our present subject: if any one says that he hopes spiritually to partake of the body and blood of Christ;—that the feelings of the heart are every thing, and that he regards the outward symbols as unimportant, let him remember that if the blind man whom our Lord healed had refused to go, and literally and truly wash in the pool of Siloam as he had been enjoined, he would have remained in his blindness; for "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble;" of the number of which last, those certainly are not, who arrogantly despise (like Naaman, the Syrian) the means He has appointed for conveying his gifts; and who

set at nought the express commandments of our Lord Himself, and the precepts and practice of the Apostles. If any one fears that he is not *good* enough to receive the Lord's Supper worthily, let him consider that every one is good enough to repent, and to throw himself on God's mercy through Christ, who has promised not to cast out any one who comes to Him; and that no one is good enough to do without that mercy. If he is not fit to renounce his sins, and "stedfastly purpose to lead a new life," will he be fit to abide God's judgment just as he is? Is he afraid to obey God's commands, and not afraid to disobey them? Doubtless, if he intends to continue in sin, and take no care to serve God;—or to continue in sin for the *present*, and to think of forsaking his vices when he grows old, and when his vices are about forsaking him, and to begin working out his salvation, when "the night cometh in which no man can work;" and to seek oil for his lamp, when the bridegroom knocks, and he is summoned to meet Him: such an one is, indeed, unfit to approach the Lord's table; and he is no less unfit to attend divine worship, public or

private ;—he is unfit to pray or hope for God's mercy ; he is unfit to live, and still more unfit to die. For let not any one suppose (as the great tempter of man would fain persuade him) that the neglect of God's ordinances will secure him from his judgments. God is, indeed, most merciful, but it is to those who will accept of his mercy in the way He thinks fit to bestow it : He is a merciful, but He is not a negligent Governor of the world, nor changeable in his pruposes. You know what heavy judgments were pronounced on his own peculiar People because they were deaf to his calls. Now "if he" (says Paul) "who despised Moses' Law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

Nor again, can any one plead that the command now in question is a *difficult* one to be obeyed. One would think, that even if it were not so positively enjoined, all Christians who

have any heart, and not a heart of stone, would delight in the opportunity of celebrating their Lord's death, and complying with his dying request. A friend just about to die, seldom asks in vain any thing that is not very hard and unreasonable; but if that friend were dying *for us*, what would be thought of one who should refuse to comply with his desires? And what, if his last injunction were entirely (as is the case here) for *our* benefit? But the difficulty which, I believe, usually deters men, is not the act itself of attending the Lord's table, but the duty supposed to be consequent on that, of self-examination, repentance, forsaking of sin, and devotedness to God. And that there *is* difficulty in these things, I allow; but the mistake is in supposing that these are duties to a man who attends the Lord's table, but are not equally so if he stays away. There cannot be a more groundless and absurd notion. Those who celebrate the holy communion are undoubtedly bound to have a Christian heart, and lead a Christian life; but they are not at all more bound to this than they were before. They are the more *likely*, indeed, to do this,

if they thus apply for divine grace in the manner our Lord has enjoined us;—they are the more likely, but not the more *bound*. The faith and the life of a Christian are clearly described to us in Scripture; and we are plainly taught that these, and these only, will lead to eternal life. No where are we taught (indeed the very idea is childish) that we can be saved without these duties, provided we absent ourselves from the Lord's Supper;—that our neglect of one duty will atone for our neglect of the rest.

All the difficulties, then, of the Christian's life must be encountered, through the promised aid of God's Spirit, if we would attain the Christian's hopes. *All* the will of Christ must we strive to fulfil, and "to adorn (as the Apostle says) the doctrine of God our Saviour in *all* things," if we would, indeed, have Him for our Saviour, and embrace the offers of the Gospel.

Those of you who have been partakers of that holy Sacrament, the nature of which I have been endeavouring to explain to you, I earnestly exhort to console yourselves by his

gracious promise that He will dwell in them, that He and the Father will "love them, and come and make their abode in them;" remembering constantly to endeavour after that piety, and purity, and uprightness, and singleness of heart, which will make them fit habitations for such a guest,—fit portions of the Temple of the Holy Ghost. And those who have hitherto absented themselves from this holy ordinance, I exhort to repent deeply of their sin in so doing; I exhort them (now that there is sufficient leisure before them) to reflect fully on what has been said, and not to let another opportunity go by them of obeying God's gracious invitation, lest they be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Between this and the next celebration of the Lord's Supper, there will be ample time, indeed, for the devil to "come and take away the seed" now sown in your hearts; but he cannot do this unless your heart be hard like the trodden highway.* I pray God, and I entreat you to join with me in praying, that *his* Spirit may guide

* Matt. xiii. 19.

you instead,—may increase your faith, enlighten your minds, and strengthen you with "his might, in the inner man," and feed you with the true bread from heaven that will sustain your spiritual life;—that He may "bring into the way of truth such as have erred and are deceived," and fortify the timid and doubting; and that it may please Him to "strengthen such as stand, and comfort and help the weak-hearted, and raise up them that fall, and, finally, to beat down Satan under our feet."

SERMON XI.

MATTHEW XX. 16.

Many be called, but few chosen.

THE parable I am now about to consider is one of no small importance in many respects, and, especially, as having sometimes been misunderstood in such a manner as to make it lead to results practically dangerous.

You should observe, in the first place, that this parable is introduced by our Lord in explanation of what He had been saying just before; viz. in the latter part of the nineteenth chapter. The last four verses of that, should always, in your private study of the Scriptures, be read along with the first sixteen of the twentieth chapter. And indeed, universally, in

your ordinary private reading of the Bible to yourselves and your families, I recommend you to disregard, or rather, carefully to avoid, the division of the several books into those portions called *chapters;* and to prefer beginning and ending, if possible, at the beginning and end of some one discourse or narrative; or, at any rate, at some other place oftener than the beginning or end of a chapter. The divisions into chapters and verses, which were introduced—merely for convenience of reference—many hundred years after the sacred books were written, are by some persons ignorantly supposed to be, like the chapters in modern books, the work of the authors themselves. And even those who do not fall into this mistake, are yet led, by their habit of attending to these divisions, unconsciously to separate in their minds passages which in sense are closely connected; and thus to break up, as it were, the sacred books into disjointed fragments, so as to obscure, and often pervert, the meaning of the writers.

Jesus, after having answered the inquiry of Peter, what they should have, who had

"forsaken* all, and followed Him," by promising them an everlasting inheritance, proceeds to say that the rewards of the next world would not be distributed according to the expectations which most men at that time entertained; and that "many who were first should be last, and the last, first." "For," says He (in the first verse of the twentieth chapter, which evidently begins in the very middle of a sentence), "the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard." By the Kingdom of Heaven is meant, in most of the places where the expression occurs, the visible Christian Church on earth; all the members of which society are engaged by Him, the Head of it,—the great Householder Christ Himself,—to labour in the business He allots to them. The master is described as going out at various hours to hire labourers in the market-place, where it was usual for men to stand offering themselves for employment. He "agreed with the first for a penny a-day:"† and he went

* See Note at the end of this Sermon.

† The Roman penny, or denarius,—equal, in silver, to

out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, I will give you."

Most of you, probably, are aware that it was anciently the custom in those countries to divide the whole interval, from sunrise to sunset, into twelve equal parts, which were called hours; which, therefore, were not (like the hours with us) of a fixed length, but longer or shorter hours according to the length of the days; varying, however, in a much less degree than would be the case in those more northern climates; the difference between the length of the days in summer and in winter being, in Judea, but small. Their "first hour," therefore, began, usually, near the time which we call six in the morning; their third hour would nearly correspond to what we call nine in the forenoon; the eleventh, to five in the afternoon; and so, of the rest. "Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

about 7½*d.* of our money, but of greater value in commodities, on account of the greater scarcity of silver,—appears to have been the ordinary day's wages.

And again, he went out about the eleventh hour, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him" (now this part of the parable deserves particular notice), "Because no man hath hired us." He sends these also into the vineyard; and at the end of the day calls the labourers to be paid, beginning at the last, who "received every man a penny. But when the first came, they expected to receive more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the master, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go away; it is my will to give unto this last even as unto thee."* Is

* If, according to the notions some entertain of a millennium, the Jews by nation are hereafter to be restored in triumph to Jerusalem, and enjoy, on being converted, some special favour above other Christians, this would completely falsify the lesson of this parable.

it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Art thou envious at my being bountiful?"* And Jesus concludes his parable by the repetition of what He had said at the beginning of it; "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen."

Now the mistake I alluded to in respect of this parable, (and which I have even seen in popular tracts) is this: the labourers first hired have been said to represent such persons as have lived from their youth upwards in the belief and practice of true religion; those hired at the third hour,—such as have begun, though in a Christian land, to lead a life of irreligion, but have been early reclaimed and converted; those at the sixth and ninth hours,—such as have gone on till middle age, or later, in sin and irreligion, and have then repented and reformed; and those called at the eleventh hour,—such as have persevered in a refusal to

* I have translated the above passage exactly from the original, retaining, however, the words of our version, except where, from being somewhat obsolete, they did not clearly express the sense to ordinary readers of the present day.

conform their life to the Gospel, till the best part of that life is gone, and till they find themselves just on the brink of the grave. And it has been accordingly inferred from this parable, that all these different descriptions of persons, even to those whose repentance has been deferred to extreme old age, shall be accounted equal in God's sight, and receive the same reward. Indeed, according to this view, such interpreters as I have been alluding to might perhaps even go a step further, and say, that it is even *better* to reform and repent late in life, than to serve God faithfully from childhood to the grave; because those first hired are represented as paid last, and dismissed with a rebuke, for grudging that they received no more than the rest; and because it is said, that "the last shall be first, and the first last!" Another consequence which would naturally flow from such an interpretation, is, that one who is leading a sinful, a careless, or an irreligious life, may plead that he is not yet called,—that he must wait God's good time,—that he hopes his turn will come before he dies,—and that being then called by the irresistible force of the Holy

Spirit, he will be suddenly converted at the eleventh hour, in his last sickness perhaps, and will then be made equal with those who have "borne the burden and heat of the day:" thus enjoying the advantage, such as it is, of devoting himself through life to the indulgence of all his passions, and to the pursuit of all this world's goods; and then, when his passions are cooled by age and infirmity, and he feels that this world will shortly be no place for him, he is to be at once converted and sanctified, and made heir of an equal inheritance with the most persevering Christian.

This may be a very comfortable doctrine to those who are disposed to "serve" (which our Lord declares to be impossible) "two masters, God and Mammon," (*i. e.* worldly goods)—who wish to serve, more properly speaking, Mammon and God; first the one, as long as they are able, and then the other. But if such were the meaning of this parable, it would be strangely at variance with every thing else we meet with in Scripture: as, for instance, with the parable of the Sower; in which it is said of the seed which "fell by the way side," not

that it was *late* before it came up, but that "the fowls of the air devoured it;" that is, that those whose hearts are hard like the trodden highway, so that the word of God does not sink in, and is not received by them, are totally deprived of the benefit of it: "then cometh the devil, and taketh away the seed out of their heart, lest they should believe and be saved." And it is declared also that the seed which "fell among thorns" was choked by the thorns springing up with it, so that it "brought no fruit to perfection;" that is, as Jesus himself explains, that those in whom the word of God is "choked" with the riches, and pleasures, and cares of this world, are as unprofitable hearers as the other, and do not perfect any fruit.

But, in truth, the parable itself of the labourers in the vineyard, even if you look to that alone, will sufficiently explain itself thus far at least, that it will be plain, if you consider it attentively, the interpretation I have been speaking of cannot be the true one. How can it be supposed that the labourers who were hired in the middle of the day, and in the evening, can represent such *Christians* as have,

till middle-life, or till old age, *refused* to hear and obey the Gospel; have shut their ears to its promises and warnings; have neglected to learn any thing about it, or have not made use of what they have learned? The gospel does, from its own nature and intrinsic character, hold out an invitation and a warning to all who have heard it, or who might have heard it. Such persons as we are now speaking of have been deaf to this invitation and this warning. They have been summoned to go and labour in the vineyard, and have refused. Whereas, no mention is made, in the parable, of the householder offering to hire, at the first hour, any labourers who refused to work till the third, the sixth, the ninth, or the eleventh. On the contrary, as if to guard against all danger of such an interpretation as the one I have been speaking of, we are told that he asked those he found at the eleventh hour, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" they say unto him, "*Because no man hath hired us:*" on which we are told that, in consequence, as it seems, of his finding that their standing idle did not arise from want of inclination, but from inability to get employment, he sends

them into the vineyard, and pays them according to their good will, and not their actual services. Nothing can be plainer, therefore, than that the true interpretation of the parable cannot be that which I have been alluding to.

I am not saying, you will observe, that there is no hope left for such as may have long resisted God's gracious calls, and lived in sin or carelessness. "Let the wicked forsake his way and turn unto the Lord, for He will have mercy, and will abundantly pardon;" only, let him turn at once; for though it may be never too late to repent, it is always too late to think of deferring repentance. But what I mean is, that whatever may be, in fact, the case of disobedient Christians, this particular parable has no reference at all to that, but to another entirely different.

Nor is it difficult to discover what its true meaning is. The Jews had been long favoured with the knowledge of the true God; and it was to them first that the Gospel, which was the fulfilment of all the prophecies and types in their law, was preached; first by our Lord Himself, and afterwards by his Apostles. The

Samaritans had also, for several generations, renounced idolatry, and worshipped the one true God. And these had the Gospel preached to them by Jesus himself, in the latter part of his ministry, and by his Apostles within a short time after it had been preached at Jerusalem.* These, then, answer to the labourers hired in the morning, and in the earlier parts of the day. It was several years after that the call was extended to that class of persons called the "devout" Gentiles;† those, that is, who had forsaken idolatry, and without becoming complete proselytes, attended the Jewish Synagogues, and worshipped the Lord. And it was later still that the idolatrous Gentiles‡ were also called; those who had hitherto been in thick darkness, ignorant of the true God, and involved in the grossest superstitions. And among these, different nations were enlightened, not all at once, but at several intervals, as the preaching of the word gradually extended. And the Gospel, wherever it went, proclaimed the *same* glad tidings to all alike who should

* Acts viii. 5. † Acts x. 28. ‡ Acts xiii. 46.

embrace it,—the full remission of past sins, and admittance to equal favour with God, and the inheritance of equal rewards, and possession of equal privileges with the Jews, who had been from the *first* God's peculiar people. It would of course happen, also, that there would be, among those, whether Jews or Gentiles, to whom the glad tidings were announced, individuals both young and old, and middle-aged: all of whom, provided they listened to, and obeyed the call when they did receive it, were considered equal in God's sight; like the labourers whom "no man had hired" till the ninth, or till the eleventh hour, but who readily accepted the offer as soon as they did receive it.

The murmuring of the one set of labourers at the bounty of their master towards the rest, evidently signifies,—what Jesus foresaw, and (in many other places as well as in this parable) foretold,—the indignation of the Jews at the call of the Gentiles to an equal participation with themselves, the seed of Abraham, in those privileges, and that divine favour which for so many ages they had been accustomed to regard as their own peculiar birthright. This was,

to them, the most startling of all the Gospel-mysteries. "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs," was the stumbling-block which chiefly influenced many of them to reject the Gospel, and thus exclude themselves from the advantages which they grudged should be imparted to others. The Messiah, or Christ, whom they were looking for, they expected as a great temporal Prince, who should subdue all their enemies, and exalt their nation above all others. And when He was announced to them as not only claiming no "kingdom of this world," but as calling the despised Gentiles to equal privileges with themselves, the greater part could not endure to believe any thing so disgustful to their habitual feelings, and so disappointing to all their fondly-cherished hopes.

And hence sprung their peculiar hatred, and especial persecution of Paul, above the other Apostles, because he was more especially the Apostle of the Gentiles. Yet even he always endeavoured first, in every city, to convert the Jews; most of whom seem to have rejected the Gospel chiefly through envy at the offer made to the Gentiles. "It was necessary," said

he and Barnabas, (at Antioch of Pisidia,) "that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you.... lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

And this conduct of the Jews our Lord alludes to, in his remarks on the faith of the Roman Centurion, whose servant He healed; saying, "Many will* come from the East and from the West, and sit down with Abraham in the Kingdom of Heaven; and the children of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness." The "children of the kingdom"—those who had long been subjects of God's kingdom, and claim his favour as their birthright,—will most of them reject his offers, and be excluded, through their own obstinacy, from the salvation which many of the Gentiles will accept.

It is the same thing He is alluding to in the parable of the Prodigal Son; in which, the one who after having been "lost, was found again," represents evidently the Gentiles received into

* I have used "will" instead of "shall," in rendering this passage, as the sense requires, agreeably to the modern use of the two words.—See *Archbishop King's* "*Discourse on Predestination*," p. 476, Note.

favour as God's People; and the other son, who had remained at home, the Jews, who were jealous of their brother's favourable reception. And He is alluding, again, to the same point, I have no doubt, in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, as representing, respectively, the Jews, rich in divine favour, and the Gentiles, regarded by them as wretched outcasts; but received into "Abraham's bosom"* (according to the expression He had used in speaking of the Centurion's faith), while "the children of the kingdom" were rejected.

Our Lord's allusions to this subject are the more frequent, as being intended to prepare the minds of the disciples for the announcement that was afterwards to be made to them, and which He foresaw would be one of mysterious and revolting difficulty,—the call of the

* The metaphor employed being that of a *feast*, He speaks of those "who were afar off," sitting down "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom," to denote their being received as God's People. The original is literally "*lying down*," that being the posture then used at meals; and hence, the description of Lazarus as "in Abraham's bosom" (*i. e.* placed next to him at the feast), corresponds exactly with the other.

Gentiles.* And it is to this He is alluding, in the parable now before us, when He says, "the last shall be first, and the first last:" that is, those who were long left in ignorance of the true God, shall have the offers of the Gospel proposed to them, and shall, as many of them as will accept those offers, be preferred to those "sons of Abraham after the flesh" to whom the Gospel is to be *first* preached, but who shall have been more backward in accepting it, or who shall have finally rejected it.

"Many," says He, "are called, but few chosen." All the Jewish nation, it is evident, were "called;" both by the circumstance of the Gospel having been preached to them first of all, and likewise by having in their hands "the Law and the Prophets," which pointed to Jesus as the Christ. But those alone of them were "chosen" to the Gospel-rewards, who availed themselves of these advantages, and confessed the Lord Jesus.

And so it is with Christians at the present day. We are all "called;" the knowledge of

* See Acts xi.

the Gospel being itself an invitation to accept it, and enrol ourselves in Christ's service; but those of us only will be "chosen" by Him to receive "the inheritance of Saints," who heartily embrace the invitation, and, in our lives, as well as with our lips, acknowledge Jesus as our Lord.

It is an unsafe practice so to dwell on the interpretation of any particular word occurring in Scripture, as to imply that each term must have,—like one of the technical terms of any science,—exactly the same meaning in every passage where it is employed. It is not an uncommon plan, and it is a very dangerous one, to lay down precise definitions of the meaning of each of the principal words used in Scripture, and then to interpret every sentence in which they occur according to those definitions. The works of the sacred writers are *popular*, not *scientific*. They did not intend to confine themselves, like the author of any philosophical system, to some strict technical sense of each word, but expressed their meaning in each passage, in such language as seemed, on each occasion, best fitted to

convey it:* and if we would rightly understand any work, we must, of course, be careful not to regard it as a different kind of composition from what it really is. I have no thought, therefore, of laying down what is to be the meaning, and what the application, throughout Scripture, of the word "called," and the word "chosen," as if each of them were always to have the same force, without any reference to the sense and drift of the several passages in which they are found. The sacred writers were very far from aiming at any such systematic style of composition. On the contrary, the word "chosen" or "elect" (both are translations of the *same* word in the original) is applied in different places to different descriptions of persons, according to the subject treated of in each passage. For instance, the whole nation of the Israelites are continually spoken of as God's "chosen" or "elect" People; which in one sense they were, inasmuch as He had separated them from all other nations to receive peculiar privileges and advantages. But the greater part

* See Essay iii. sect. 3, p. 125. Second Series.

of those who came out of Egypt forfeited his favour, and incurred his heavy judgments through their disobedience. Still they were not the less, in the sense just explained, God's "chosen" or "elect," even while they were perishing by thousands in the wilderness under the plagues sent upon them. The Israelites chosen to receive the *offer* of the "good land" of promise, were six hundred thousand; but out of these, two persons only, Caleb and Joshua, were chosen to "enter into that rest." So also Paul, in addressing the several Gentile-Churches, speaks to all his converts as the "chosen" or "elect" People of God, since they had all been admitted to the inestimable advantage of having the knowledge of the Gospel; though it is plain from the severe rebukes he bestows on several members of those churches, that he did not consider them as necessarily sure of salvation in consequence of this favour, unless they themselves were diligent "to make their calling and election sure."

Although, however, there *are* many words in Scripture used in different *senses* in different places, yet, properly speaking, the word "elect,"

or "chosen," is not one of these; but rather may be said (in strict language) to have different *applications*. The things *to which** men are spoken of as "chosen," are, in the several passages of Scripture, different. And this is the case with very many other words in common use among us. Take, for example, the word "Governor," which is sometimes understood of the governor of a province or colony; sometimes of the governor of an hospital, or again of a military post. Each of these is called a governor in the same sense; that is, one who is appointed to control and superintend; but they are governors, respectively, *of* different things.

In a certain sense, then, or rather in a certain application of the term, all who have known the Gospel are the chosen or elect of God, as being separated from others of the human race, (many of whom, we know, are to this day involved in the darkness of idolatry,) to enjoy an inestimable privilege; which, however, it rests with them to use or to neglect.†

* See Logic, Appendix, Art. "Election."

† See Essay iii. Second Series.

But in another sense, or rather in another application, those only are "chosen" who do take advantage of this their call. And it is of them our Lord is speaking in this discourse, as "chosen" or elected not merely to receive the call to salvation through the Gospel, (for "many," He says, "are called,") but, as fit objects of God's eternal favour, in consequence of their obeying that call.

When, again, He says to his Apostles, "Have I not *chosen* you twelve? and one of you is a devil,"* it is plain He is speaking of those chosen to high privileges only; not to final reward consequent on the use made of those privileges.

These passages, then, compared together, will serve to shew the mistake those fall into who imagine that the word "chosen," or "elect," must everywhere be understood of the same persons, and that these are to be regarded as sure of salvation. In the parable before us the term *is* so applied; viz. to those chosen out of the whole number that have received Christ's

* John vi. 70.

call, as fit objects of his eternal favour, on account of their having obeyed that call. In other places, the "called," and the "chosen," mean the same; viz. those elected, not to obtain salvation absolutely, but to receive the "call" to it; which it rests with them to listen to, or to disregard.

And even when the most positive and seemingly unconditional promises are made, it will always be found, not only that there is a condition understood, as limiting the promise, viz. the condition (which every one is free to fulfil or to neglect) of obedience to God's call, but also, that those promises are not made merely to those of whom God *foresaw* that they *would* be thus obedient, but to many others also: because their failure of attaining what was thus placed within their reach, was a failure not on his part, but on theirs. Thus, when the Israelites, on their deliverance out of Egypt, were promised that they should be brought into the "land flowing with milk and honey," this promise was not given on the ground of their *foreseen* faith and obedience; for they were a perverse generation, and forfeited, as God must

have foreknown, the promise held out to them; so that all the grown men, except two out of six hundred thousand, perished in the wilderness, and "entered not into his rest."

And an instance of the same kind, still more remarkable, if possible, than that of the promise to the Israelites, occurs in the very discourse of which the parable of the Labourers forms a part. Jesus promises to his *twelve* Apostles,* "When the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." He mentions here no condition;—nothing of what was hereafter to be expected of them in order to their obtaining this glory, only, what had already taken place;—"ye, which have followed me." And yet one of the Apostles He was thus addressing, was, we know, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him; in reference to whom He says in another place, "Have I not *chosen* you twelve? and one of you is a devil;" thus foretelling, as well as foreseeing, that one of those to whom this blessing was promised

* Matt. xix. 28.

would convert it into a curse. Yet He pronounces the blessing on all of them, without limitation; because they could not but know what was the condition on which the promise was made, and that a traitor could inherit no share of it.

The reason, then, as far as Scripture teaches us—why, when "many are called," there are "few chosen," is, that unhappily there have, in general, been but few of those many that heartily obey the call. Whether each of you that now hear me shall be one of those few, it rests with you to determine; for every one of you is of the number of the called, and "him that cometh to Christ, that he may have life," He has declared He "will in no wise cast out." All of you have not indeed had equal advantages; some may have been entrusted with five talents; others, with two, or with one; but all have had sufficient advantages to put you in the condition of the labourers summoned to work in the vineyard. All of you have known, or had opportunities of knowing, from your childhood, that you have a soul to be saved, and that it is through the knowledge

and practice of Gospel-truth that alone you can inherit the Gospel-promises. If you have learnt little or nothing beyond this, even this was enough to shew you the necessity of endeavouring to learn more. And though all have not equal opportunities of doing this, most I fear have had more opportunities than they have made full use of.

Those, then, who have long walked in the path of Christian faith and holiness, have no reason, from this parable, or from any thing else in Scripture, to doubt that they shall obtain, through God's mercy in Christ, a higher reward, if they persevere in that course, than those who have never thought seriously of another world till they were near departing from this. But let those, again, who have hitherto been deaf to their Master's call, and have but little time left, not lose one more opportunity of setting themselves to make the most of that little. The humblest degree of heavenly happiness (supposing that no more is now placed within their reach) is far—very far—beyond the greatest amount of worldly goods, even could they retain these, on earth,

for ever. And if they do not attain this, they know that a "fearful looking for of judgment to come" is the only alternative.

Let them consider, then, their Lord as now addressing to them that question, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" They cannot indeed answer, "Because no man hath hired us;" but they can answer by throwing themselves immediately on his mercy, and with deep repentance for their past neglect of Him, accepting, though late, the gracious offers they have hitherto disregarded: striving the more earnestly before "the door is shut," to gain admittance to the presence of Him who will "abundantly pardon" those that return to Him.

It is, indeed, very difficult for those advanced in life, not merely to receive a new impression for the moment, but to make a total change in all their habits, and thoughts, and feelings; but it will be still more difficult every moment they delay it; and in that change is their only hope. "Grieve not then any longer God's Holy Spirit," which is ready to "help our infirmities," and which alone can enable you to surmount that difficulty; for "with God all things are possible."

And let no one mislead you into the idea that you are not yet "called;" or that your being finally "chosen" is a thing unconnected with your own exertions. You are all of you "the called;" you are all "chosen" to enjoy the inestimable privilege of the Gospel-offers. It rests with you, now, to become finally the chosen; — chosen or elected to obtain the Gospel-rewards, and to enter into God's eternal rest. Strive, therefore, "to make your calling and election sure." And whether you feel, each of you, that your remaining time of trial may be short, or that it may possibly be of some length (of that, no one can be certain), delay not to "work out your own salvation" while "it is day, because the night cometh, in which no man can work."

NOTE TO PAGE 281.

The Apostles, and those others who in the strictest sense "followed Jesus," had necessarily "left all" in order to do so. Their immediate attendance on his person, usually, and their occasional travels as missionaries sent by Him through the towns and villages, precluded them from taking care of any property, or following any trade. They appear to have thrown together all they had; including the contributions of wealthy and liberal believers,* into a common stock—"the bag," of which Judas was the keeper, —out of which they subsisted, and also gave alms to the indigent.

The young man mentioned above, whose "great possessions" proved a snare to him, was invited to join this society, and "come and follow" Jesus; and was, of course, required to conform to the rule of the society, by "selling all that he had." That the precept was not designed for Christians generally, but only for those whose proper business and *profession* was attendance on the person of Jesus, and going about as missionary-preachers, seems almost too plain to need proof. If *all* men were to attempt to "sell all that they have," there could be none to buy; and if none were to be occupied in the ordinary pursuits of industry, all would perish for want of food and clothing: but there is certainly some degree of plausibility in the erroneous notion, that though this is not required of Christians *generally*, there is a *high degree* of merit in thus divesting one's self of property; and that he

* Luke viii. 3.

who "would be perfect" should take this course. And it is commonly supposed, — certainly not without some show of reason,—that the renunciation of private property, and the system of community of goods, was, for a time at least, adopted by the *whole* of the infant Church at Jerusalem. That the system, if ever so adopted, was soon discontinued, is perfectly evident. Those "who were rich in this world," were exhorted to be "ready to give, and glad to distribute;" which implies both that there were rich men in the Churches, and that they were not required to sell all that they had, and cease to possess property; which would have left them, for the future, nothing to give. And the same may be learned from all that we read about the collections made in Greece for the poor Christians of Judea; and from many other circumstances in the sacred history.

But it will appear on attentive examination, that even in the infancy of the Church at Jerusalem, the community of goods was in reality confined to *those engaged in the ministry*; including the female Catechists, or Deaconesses, who were called "Widows." Just at first, this description may have included *all* the believers; that is, those who were the first to embrace the Gospel may *all* have been employed in some department of the ministry. But that the community of goods was not a regulation extending to members even of that early Church, simply as members, is plain, even from the very words of Peter to Ananias; whom he reminds that the land, and the money it was sold for, were at his own disposal. If a renunciation of his property had been the condition of his becoming a *Christian*, we can hardly suppose Peter would have so expressed himself, and have made this circumstance an aggravation of his sin in "*lying* to the Holy Ghost." But the whole transaction becomes intelligible, if we suppose, — what I have no doubt is

the correct supposition—that Ananias and his wife offered themselves for the *ministry* (for which, the renunciation of private property *was* at that time a condition), and thus sought a share of the maintenance supplied by the common stock, while they fraudulently retained private property besides.

For a fuller and a very able discussion of this point, see *Hinds's History*, vol. i. p. 209.

SERMON XII.

1 KINGS XXII. 8.

There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.

SEVERAL of the portions of Scripture appointed for the Sunday-morning-Lessons relate to the history of Ahab, the deluded and wicked king of Israel,—his sins,—the warnings he received and failed to profit by,—and his final ruin. Seduced by his idolatrous queen, he in turn seduced his people into the worship of false gods,—abused his power with the most tyrannical cruelty,—and, at length, brought down heavy judgments on his corrupted subjects, and destruction on himself and his whole family.

This record of his life may serve as an instructive warning to all men. For though the system of *temporal* judgments and temporal rewards under which the Israelites lived, was in great measure peculiar to that nation, and is not to be looked for now, we may be sure that impenitent sinners will not escape divine judgments in the next world, though they may in this. Our Lord would not permit the mistaken zeal of his Apostles to call down fire from heaven on those who rejected Him; saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit *ye** are of:" but He declares that in the next world those will not escape who should be deaf to the higher promises and more awful threats of the Gospel, when announced by those very Apostles: "Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah" (cities, we should remember, which *were* destroyed by fire from heaven) "in the day of judgment, than for them."

But the circumstance in Ahab's history, to which I wish now to call your especial attention, is, his being angry with the prophets who

* Ὑμεῖς.

warned him of God's judgments; and seeming to attribute to them,—the messengers sent to him,—the evils he was bringing on himself.

He finds fault with one prophet who had foretold the famine brought on the land through the sins he had occasioned; saying, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Again, to the prophet who rebukes him for his murder and robbery of Naboth, he says, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" And, finally, when the prophet Micaiah has been made the divine messenger of woes to come, he hates and reviles and punishes him, for prophesying evil and not good concerning him.

The whole of this transaction now before us is one of the strangest, and, in itself, most improbable that is any where to be found. I say, improbable *in itself*, because the conduct of Ahab is so utterly inconsistent and absurd, that one is at a loss to account for it; and yet if we look around us, and judge from experience, we shall find that a like conduct is not at all uncommon; and therefore,—unreasonable and extravagant as it was,—is no wise hard to be believed.

Ahab, we are told, had formed a design, in conjunction with Jehoshaphat king of Judah, his ally, of attacking his enemies the Syrians, at Ramoth-Gilead, a place which they had taken from the Israelites. And at the suggestion of Jehoshaphat (who though the ally of this wicked king, was in other respects faithful to the true God), Ahab calls together and consults on the occasion the prophets, or pretended prophets, of the Lord; all of whom assure him that his expedition will prosper, and that the Lord will deliver the place into his hands. Jehoshaphat however is not quite satisfied with their declaration; having probably some suspicion that these "prophets of Ahab" (for so they are called in the 22d and 23d verses) might not be truly inspired by the Lord; and inquires whether there "is not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?" And the answer to this inquiry strikes one at first sight as truly extraordinary. There was, it seems, another prophet, whom Ahab did not like to consult, because he "prophesied not good, but evil, concerning him;" and whom (doubtless for that reason) he had, we are told, imprisoned. We are not

expressly informed in Scripture of this prophet Micaiah having formerly prophesied against Ahab; but we find mention (in the latter part of the 20th chapter) of a certain prophet, who is not there named, foretelling evil to Ahab and his people, on account of his having suffered to escape Benhadad, king of Syria, whom he had been appointed (as it appears) to destroy. There is no mention of any punishment inflicted by the king on this man; only we are told that he was displeased with him. Now it appears from the Jewish historian Josephus, to have been an undoubted tradition among the Jews, that this prophet was no other than this very Micaiah here spoken of; and though such a tradition would not be allowed to have any decisive authority, it is in itself so probable, and agrees so well with the whole of the Scripture history, that there seems no reason to question the truth of it. For his unfavourable prophecy then, whatever it was, Micaiah was out of favour with the king of Israel, so that he was unwilling to consult him.

The strange part of the transaction is, that he did not seem to question the reality of his prophetic character; for he tells Jehoshaphat,

(not that this man was an impostor and vain pretender to inspiration, — not that he told falsehold instead of truth, but) that he told him things which it was not pleasant to hear; he acknowledged that he was "a man by whom they might inquire of the Lord," but that he hated him for prophesying evil of him. The confusion of thought which prevailed in this king's mind is very remarkable; he must, one would suppose, have believed either that the man was a false prophet or a true one: if he thought him a false pretender, that was reason enough for disliking and for punishing him, but none for being troubled and distressed by his predictions: if he thought him a true prophet, it was most absurd, as well as unjust, to hate him for foretelling what was to come to pass by God's decrees, and which God had commissioned him to foretell. Or if, again, he was in *doubt* whether he were a true prophet or not, nothing but the event could clear up that doubt; still, as before, it was the truth or falsity of his predictions, not their being favourable or unfavourable, that should have made him the object of approbation or of displeasure.

One would almost suppose from Ahab's language and conduct, that he considered the prophet as the cause of the disasters that he foretold;—that his unfavourable predictions *brought upon him* the future evils, instead of bringing merely the *knowledge* of them; and yet one knows not how to account for a person in his senses entertaining so extravagant a notion. But some confused idea of this kind, the offspring of folly and passion combined, seems to have possessed him.

And there are many other instances to be met with of a like absurdity, in men who have not a habit of thinking accurately and calmly, when they are still further blinded and confused by the influence of their feelings. The most ancient Greek poet that has come down to us, and who is universally allowed to have had a thorough acquaintance with human nature, at least as it was in his time, and accordingly to have described, if not what actually took place, at least what was likely to take place,—represents one of his kings as acting precisely the same part with Ahab; viz. reproaching and bitterly reviling a prophet for making unfavourable predictions concerning him. And in like manner

we read in history, of Tigranes, king of Armenia, putting to death a messenger who brought him the unpleasant news of the near approach of an army of his enemies, the Romans;—as if the bearer of evil tidings deserved to be hated and punished;—as if he were the cause of what he announced. A like absurdity also is related by modern travellers in some parts of the East, where a belief prevails of the influence of the the stars on men's destiny, and where, consequently, the astrologers, who pretend to consult the stars, are held in great repute: it is common, they tell us, to see persons crowding round one of these astrologers, with the utmost respect, and with promises of reward, entreating him to make the stars propitious to them: believing that their fate is fixed and recorded in the stars; believing that these astrologers know this, and can foresee what is thus inevitably determined; and yet notwithstanding,—nay, for this very reason,—applying to them to alter it. The contradictions of a feverish dream, or the ravings of a madman, cannot possibly exceed in absurdity such instances as these. But unaccountable as such folly may be, we are compelled to admit

that it does exist in human nature; and we shall find on a careful examination, that in a greater or less degree, it exists in a larger number than we should at first sight expect.

He that would profit by this mournful picture of human weakness and inconsistency, should set himself to consider whether he is wholly exempt from it himself. It is quite certain that most men are disposed to believe or disbelieve according to their wishes. Even the wisest men are not exempt from this bias of the judgment, unless they are carefully on their guard against it; and the generality may be observed on many occasions mustering every argument they can think of, to persuade themselves of the truth of what is agreeable, and raising every objection against any thing which they do not like to believe. This is a lower degree of absurdity; but are there not many, besides Ahab, who go a step further? who studiously shut their eyes and ears against unwelcome truths; and when they cannot bring themselves to disbelieve them, seem to resolve at least not to think about them? It is indeed well known that most, if not all, who are greatly outrunning their income,

cannot bring themselves to look over their accounts, because they know that these would present to their view the deranged state of their affairs; and thus, instead of stopping short in their road to ruin, they endeavour only to blind themselves to that ruin. The next step beyond this, and which naturally follows from it, is to feel displeasure and dislike against any one who brings to their mind the thoughts of that which it is not pleasant to think of;—to hate those who tell them of what is amiss, with a view to its amendment, and who warn them of approaching evil, in order that they may avoid it; and to prefer those who flatter them with favourable and pleasing, though false views, instead of telling them unwelcome truths;—to say, in short (if not in so many words, yet plainly enough to be understood,) as Isaiah expresses it, "to the seers, see not; to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; prophesy unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits."

It is not very common, perhaps, to meet with the utmost extent of this folly, or at least with such a frank avowal of it as Ahab gave: "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning

me, but evil;" but a certain degree of it is by no means rare. I mean, that it is not uncommon to hear men confess, from such motives as influenced Ahab, that they like or dislike this and that preacher; that such and such a sermon or book is agreeable or offensive to them; that they do not approve of the discussion of this or that subject; or that such a one's mode of discussing it is unpleasant to their feelings: and this, I say, on Ahab's motives,—*i. e.* not with a view to the truth or falsity of what is said, but according as it is favourable or unfavourable to their wishes.

Of course, if any one objects to any discourse he hears, that it is not conformable to Scripture, if he has taken due pains to ascertain that this is the case,—that the objection is well founded,—no one could possibly blame him for not liking what he has heard: or, again, it may be, though not unscriptural, yet injudicious, and unedifying; it may have the fault of dwelling on matters of small moment, and passing over points of higher consequence; or the Christian doctrines and duties may be taught in a coarse and offensive, or in a feeble and unimpressive style. All these, and other such, are faults of greater or less

weight, but which no one can be censured for objecting to, where they really exist. Such are not, of course, the grounds of complaint and of approbation which I allude to. But is not commonly the first feeling by which many men are led to approve or disapprove what is said, the feeling of satisfaction and comfort, or of uneasiness, which it excites in themselves? Is not the first question that usually occurs, not, how far each doctrine is agreeable to *Scripture*, but, to *ourselves*; not whether it is conformable to God's will, but to ours?

Such is, and ever has been, and ever will be, the nature of man; and he who is not aware of this,—who does not suspect that he can be in any degree guilty of such an absurdity,—is only the more likely to fall into it, from not being on his guard against it. And the consequence will be, that he will shut his ears against the truths which he does not like, and find fault with the preacher rather than with himself.

Of the folly and the incalculable danger of such a proceeding no one can doubt who will but consider the subject for a few moments attentively. The first question to be asked surely is,

Is this true? Does the Bible contain a revelation of God's will? And are these doctrines, which I hear, contained in the Bible? Let this, I say, be the *first* question; because, if you allow yourself, in the first place, to consider what you like, and feel satisfied with, the answer to the other question (respecting its truth) may receive a very different answer from what it would, if it had been first asked. If you allow yourself *first* to feel approbation or displeasure towards the preacher or the discourse, you will be very likely afterwards to decide with favour or with prejudice on what is said. But if you endeavour, in the first instance, to judge impartially, and if you find that the doctrines you hear are true, but still feel an aversion towards them, there is reason to suspect, from that circumstance, that these are such as *you* stand *most* in need of. For if there be any one who holds and lays to heart some part of the Gospel-doctrines, and keeps others out of sight,—if he practises part of his duties and omits others,—if he abstains from many sins, but allows himself in one or two; to such a person it cannot but be more agreeable to hear his favourite doctrines inculcated,—to hear

the duties recommended which he practises,—to listen to the censure of such sins as he is free from,—than to hear those points touched upon in which he is erroneous or deficient. He will naturally shrink when the unsound and diseased spot is touched ever so lightly.

If, indeed, some unpleasing doctrine be taught which leads to no practical result,—if some evil be announced which can neither be avoided nor alleviated, there is nothing unreasonable in drawing back from the unavailing pain of hearing what cannot be profitable. If, for instance, I were to teach you that certain men are absolutely appointed, by God's decree, to inevitable destruction, and can do nothing to avoid it, however true this might be, you might be excused for not listening to it, because nothing profitable could follow from it. But you have never heard any such doctrine from me. It is our part to tell you of no doctrine but what you may believe, —of no duties which you cannot practise,—of no dangers which you may not avoid;—and if I have warned you of the wrath to come, it is in order that you may flee from it. I have not probed a painful wound, but for the purpose of

healing it. Bear ever in mind, therefore, the caution of attending to most, and laying most to heart, those doctrines and those admonitions which are least acceptable to you. Try them, by all means, by the word of God; and reject them if not true: but if you find that they are true, instead of shutting your ears against them as unwelcome, be assured that that very circumstance shews the especial need you have of them. If this be not done, the most edifying, and even (on the whole) acceptable minister, may labour for years entirely in vain, while each one of his hearers attends to, and applauds what he in particular least needs; one, one part, and another, another. But if you endeavour sincerely to learn what you are ignorant of,—to unlearn what may be mistaken opinions, and to correct whatever is amiss, you will have this gratification, as well as advantage, that the truth will become more agreeable to you in proportion as you conform yourself to it; and you will escape the heavy condemnation which our Lord alludes to, of "loving darkness better than light," and rejecting the truth which He came to bear witness of; and giving credit, like Ahab, to

"a lying spirit" which leads you on to destruction.

It was decreed that, after all, the stroke o divine judgment should not fall on him but by his own blind obstinacy,—that he should be left to bring it on himself. And accordingly a warning was sent him, which it was in his power to attend to and profit by. But he hated the prophet for being the bearer of unpleasant tidings, and, by a strange and absurd inconsistency, though he acknowledged that he was a "man by whom he might inquire of the Lord," yet indulged his aversion and displeasure, till at length he persuaded himself (as every one will do, sooner or later, who endeavours earnestly to deceive himself) that the prophecy was false, and that he should return in peace from the battle.

It is recorded by Josephus, that the other prophets persuaded Ahab to disbelieve Micaiah, on the ground that Elijah, who they said was a greater prophet than he, had foretold that in the same place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth (which was close to the city of Samaria) they should lick the blood of Ahab. And this,

they urged, could not be fulfilled, if he was to be killed (as Micaiah foretold) at Ramoth-Gilead. This tradition does not seem unlikely to be true; for at first sight the two prophecies do not seem compatible; though we know both were fulfilled.

The servants (at least one of them) of this foolish king seem to have partaken of their master's absurd inconsistency. The one who was sent to fetch the prophet, urges him very seriously to frame such a prediction as should be agreeable to the king. "Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good." As if the truth, or falsity of his prediction were a thing of no consequence; or as if it had rested with the prophet to *give* good or ill success to the king, instead of his merely having the knowledge what the event was to be.

The prophet answered, as any man must have done, who was at all impressed with the awful and solemn commission he bore, and the deep responsibility laid upon him, "As

the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." He did so speak; and with no other effect than increasing the displeasure against him of the foolish king; who was therefore left to rush headlong on his own ruin.

He had, indeed, numerous false prophets who encouraged him; but had he not taken pains to sear his conscience,—had he but recollected and laid to heart all that was past,—he might have had good reason to be assured that *they* were all deluded, and that Micaiah alone spoke the truth. He might have reflected on his own repeated and outrageous rebellion against the Lord, in worshipping idols, and leading his subjects into the same sin,—in persecuting,—that is, suffering his queen to persecute (which is the same thing) the prophets of the true God,—in shedding the innocent blood of Naboth on a false charge, because he coveted his land. All this, and the warnings he had received from the mouth of Elijah,—some of which, such as the famine sent on the land, had been already confirmed by the event,—might have led him to expect that God's long-deferred, but sure

judgments, would at length come upon him. But these were unpleasant thoughts, and therefore he strove to chase them from his mind: he hated them, because, like the prophet Micaiah, "they did not prophesy good, but evil concerning him;" and thus, with the folly which we laugh at in a silly child, who hides its face from what it fears, and fancies itself safe in not seeing its danger, he resolved not to listen to what he was loth to believe: he turned his displeasure not against his own sins, which had brought on the judgment, but against the prophet who warned him of it; and went forward, self-blinded, to destruction.

Painful must certainly have been the task assigned to the prophet Micaiah. For he not only had an unpleasant message to deliver, but he foresaw also that his warning would be in vain. In the vision presented before his eyes, and related by him (which, of course, is not to be considered as what literally took place, but as a means of informing his understanding, and of impressing on his mind the knowledge of the future)—in this vision it was revealed to him that the lying spirit with which Ahab's prophets were possessed

should *succeed* in deluding him to his death; "Thou shalt persuade him, and *prevail* also." The prophet therefore knew that his warning, though it was likely to have a serviceable effect on the people who heard him, by leading them, when they should see the truth of his and of Elijah's predictions, to believe in the true God and fear Him, yet would produce no effect on Ahab, except to draw down his displeasure and cruelty on himself; and thus to aggravate the sins of that wicked prince by his neglect of this last warning sent him.

Painful therefore and burdensome in every respect must have been the office here assigned to the prophet: but, nevertheless, he well knew that he was bound to discharge it faithfully, at his own peril. His folly and presumption would have been like that of Ahab, and his punishment no less, had he dared to invent a pretended prophecy for his own convenience, and to shape such an answer as should be agreeable to the hearers, and suited to advance his own interest and popularity at the expense of truth. And therefore, grievous to all parties as was the task, he firmly kept to his resolution of speaking

the "word which the Lord had put into his mouth."

Far different (blessed be God) in many respects, is the office of a minister of the Gospel, from that of the prophet Micaiah. We have not, like him, merely the task of proclaiming God's judgments against hardened sinners, and setting forth the terrors of his displeasure. On the contrary, the very word "Gospel," you know, signifies *good tidings*; and glad intelligence it surely is, to short-lived mortals, that God has prepared beyond the grave a life that shall never end, and a life of unspeakable happiness to all that will accept it on his conditions. It is the Christian minister's office to proclaim pardon to sinners, and strength from on high to the weakness of our nature, and admittance to God's favour and protection, and his constant readiness to hear those who call on Him, and to support and guide us by his Spirit through this life, and to raise us up to immortal glory, through Christ's meritorious sacrifice, in the next world. To be a "steward" (*i. e.* distributor) as Paul calls it, of this "manifold grace [favour] of God,"—to teach men what they must

do to be saved,—to dispense, as it were, to our fellow-men, the inestimable treasures of God's everlasting mercies, by shewing them how to attain them,—to be commissioned to point out to them a cure for all sorrows and troubles, a refuge in all distress, an inheritance far surpassing all that this world has to bestow,—to introduce them to the greatest and best of friends, and to instruct them how to be certain of his favour to all eternity;—all this, which is the office of the Christian minister, would seem to be, and certainly is in itself, a most pleasing as well as noble office. And one might expect, if experience did not teach a different lesson, that the discharge of such an office would be delightful to the hearers, as well as to the preacher; and that what leads to their greatest good, would be listened to and received with the greatest pleasure and the most eager attention. But our Lord foresaw, what no human teacher would have foreseen in such a case—(and what certainly no false prophet would have *foretold*, whatever he might think)—He foresaw the unacceptableness of his doctrine to a very great part of mankind; the averseness of the natural

man,—of human nature in its corrupt and original state,—to listen to and understand and embrace the gracious offers of the Gospel. He foresaw the readiness of men who do not reject it, to mistake, and corrupt, and pervert it,—to wish to have it kept out of sight, or at least in some degree disguised and accommodated to their own feelings and dispositions,—and to dislike and find fault with those who set forth the Gospel just as it was delivered to them, and who warn them plainly of the infinite danger of disregarding it. All this, I say, our Lord foresaw, and foretold, (which no false prophet would have done,) and warned his disciples to prepare for it.

In the first age of the Church, the hostility of this corrupt disposition of the natural man to the Gospel of Christ, shewed itself in the open rejection of it, and persecution of those who preached it. They were "brought before kings and magistrates," reviled, derided, scourged, and killed, by those who thought, said our Lord, that in this "they were doing God service;" though others again, — many others, — were found, who did embrace the glad offers of

salvation, and enlisted under the standard of Christ.

On the other hand, wherever Christianity (I mean the outward profession and acknowledgment of the Gospel) has become the prevailing religion in any country, of course it is not to be expected that many should openly renounce or reject it, or that the ministers or members of Christ's Church should, as such, be openly persecuted. But human nature is always and every where the same, though its corruption is manifested in many different forms. Thus, the same who *would* have been in the time of Christ and his Apostles, either deriders, or persecutors (according to their respective tempers) of Christianity, no longer indeed profess open hostility to the religion; but it is really not the more acceptable to their hearts. Like Ahab, who acknowledged Micaiah to be a prophet, but hated him for not prophesying good concerning him but evil—those who find Christianity is against them, will naturally be against Christianity, though they profess to acknowledge it. They would be more at ease in their feelings if they could keep the thoughts of it at a distance

from them, or if they could find some one to bid them "go and prosper," though he spoke by a lying spirit;—some one to persuade them that Christianity is something different from what it is: and no one who refuses to say any thing but "what the Lord shall put in his mouth," can find favour in their eyes.

Vain, therefore, must be the hope that a Christian minister should find universally a favourable reception for the divine truths—the condescending mercies—the glorious promises of the Gospel. The good tidings he has to announce will be evil tidings to those who are averse to embrace God's offers, and not disposed to comply with his will. What is there acceptable in the offer of pardon for sin to those who do not like to dwell on the thought that they *are* sinners, or to set about forsaking their sins? What is there to rejoice at in the redemption by Jesus Christ, for those who are not disposed to have faith in Him, and to love Him, and to devote themselves to his service? How can any one feel delight at the thought that God has promised his Holy Spirit to sanctify his heart, and to help his infirmities, and to support and guide

him in his Christian duty, who is unwilling to think of the infirmity of his nature,—who has no hearty desire to perform his duty,—and who is conscious that he does not pray for that help of the Holy Spirit which is bestowed only on those who do pray for it, and is withdrawn from those that neglect it? The doctrine of a future and never ending life beyond the grave is, indeed, a most comforting one to him who sees and estimates rightly the littleness of this world's goods, and the shortness of their continuance, and who will not suffer his heart to be wedded to any thing in this life, but strives earnestly day by day to lay up treasure in heaven, and to prepare himself for the coming glories of Christ's triumphant kingdom. But the very same doctrine is full of discomfort and dismay to one whose thoughts are fixed on this world,—who does not like to think of the end that must be put to all the pursuits to which he has chiefly devoted himself; and who has no relish nor care for heavenly happiness, and knows that he is not going the way to attain it. And even thus may one man hear an odious, and the other an acceptable doctrine, in the same discourse, according

as each is in his own mind predisposed to reject or to receive the doctrines of the Gospel. It is like the cloudy pillar which stood between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; which "was a cloud and darkness to them, but gave light by night to these." Even thus Paul found the Gospel of "Christ crucified," was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," but to his converts, "the wisdom of God, and the power of God."

If it were left to the choice and judgment of each one of us, what we should preach, and to whom, we might perhaps be inclined, and allowed, to accommodate our doctrine, in some degree, to the wishes of our hearers; and to teach them, if not the best lessons, at least the best they were willing to receive. But, like Micaiah the prophet, we are but the bearers of God's message; we dare not "go beyond the word of the Lord, to speak good or evil, of our own mind." If we do not set before men strongly, not only the importance of saving their souls, but the conditions on which they must be saved, we are deceiving them, not only to their own ruin, but to ours. God will require, at our hands, the

blood of those whom we have not taught and warned to the utmost of our power, by declaring to them the Gospel, just as it was delivered to us.

Consider, therefore, I beseech you, if *we* are under such a responsibility, what must be your own. A day will come when we shall surely, both of us, think much and seriously on all that has passed here: but on that day it will be too late to alter it. We must then give an account of all that we have done, and of all that we have left undone; and you also will have to render an account of the manner in which you have profited by it. "The word that I have spoken," says our Saviour, "the same shall judge him at the last day;" and that which is said by Christian ministers in his name, and is agreeable to his written word, is, in fact, spoken by Himself. If on that day we shall be convicted of having altered, or perverted, or kept back, any part of the Gospel delivered to us by Christ, it will not be allowed us to plead that we feared to give offence;—that we were considering what *you* would think of us, rather than what God would think of us;—and that we sought your present

gratification at the expense of your eternal welfare. And if any one of you be found guilty of turning a deaf ear to the Gospel truth which he has heard, or might have heard; or of considering what gave him pleasure or pain, rather than what was true or false, he will not be permitted to urge that he liked or disliked this or that doctrine; but will be told, that when truth was set before him, he chose to listen to the "lying spirit," which has succeeded in persuading him to go and perish in his own way.

SERMON XIII.

MATT. v. 13.

Ye are the salt of the earth.

THAT one man's eternal salvation should be suffered to depend, in any degree, on the conduct of another, is a most awful mystery. That our diligent exertions, or remissness—our good or bad example, the wise or unwise measures we adopt, should in any case make the possible difference of eternal life or ruin, to our children and other dependents—to many of our neighbours, and of our other countrymen—nay, perhaps even to the inhabitants of the remotest regions of the earth, is one of those dispensations of Providence which we cannot explain—which perplexes us, whenever we reflect upon it,

and which is calculated to fill us with a most anxious, and almost an appalling, sense of our own responsibility.

That the fact is as I have stated, we are compelled to admit. If through our instruction, admonition, or example, any man is kept steady in the path of duty, or forwarded in his progress, or recalled from sin, no one can doubt that *he* will reap the full benefit, though our "labour of love" will not be forgotten by a righteous God; and on the other hand, it is no less undoubted, that if, through our ill example, or seduction, or connivance, or negligence, another is drawn aside from the right way, or led, or left, to continue in sin or irreligion, he will suffer the penalty, though we shall not escape. That *another* induced him, or allowed him, to forget God, will not be admitted as a valid excuse. "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"—was Adam's excuse for his transgression; but it did not deliver him from the sentence pronounced against it. "I have set thee a watchman," (said the Lord to the Prophet Ezekiel,) "to the house of Israel: if thou dost not speak

to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." "The sons of Eli," we are told, "made themselves vile, and he restrained them not;" *he* was judged for his neglect, but *they* did not escape; and in like manner the Apostle Paul warns us (in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. viii.) of the mischief which men may do to their brethren, even by such conduct as would otherwise, in itself, be harmless: "Take heed lest this liberty of yours be a stumbling block to them that are weak: through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Thus, implying the possibility of even the utter loss of a Christian brother, resulting from the misconduct of his neighbour.

Nor will those again stand exempt from the punishment of their sins, who have been left in gross *ignorance* as to religion; though God's judgments will also doubtless fall on those, who ought to have instructed them. We are told indeed that the sin will be *aggravated* in proportion to the moral and religious knowledge of the sinner; but that a deficiency of such knowledge

will not acquit him: on the ground, I suppose, that no one is destitute of the natural faculty of conscience, by which right and wrong may be distinguished: for "the servant, who knew not his Lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes; but the servant who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." And it is evident, that the knowledge or ignorance of each, depends at least as much on the conduct of others, as his right or wrong *use* of his knowledge. Thus is man permitted to influence the welfare of his fellow-men, even in what relates to the world to come!

Strange as this dispensation of Providence may seem—though it present a *difficulty*, it cannot be for a moment allowed as an *objection* to our religion, by those at least, who allow that there is a God, who is the author of the constitution and course of nature in this present world; for the affairs of this life are regulated precisely on the principle I have just been describing. The moral world, and the natural world, in this respect correspond exactly. For it is plain that the *temporal* welfare of one person

is made to depend in a very great degree on the conduct of others. As children are not likely to grow up good *Christians* without education and parental care, so they are many years dependent even for their *lives* on a like parental care; and the manner, in which they are brought up, may make the difference of success or failure in this life, as well as in what relates to the next life. The untutored African or Indian is as much dependent on his civilized fellow-creatures for a knowledge of the useful arts, as of the truths of the Gospel. Universally, in short, man is placed, in numberless particulars, at the mercy of his fellow-men, and made to depend on them for his well-being. We need not be surprised therefore (unable as we may be to explain it), at finding, as we do, the eternal interests of our fellow-creatures committed in many respects to our care. It is of a piece with the general plan of Providence, that our conduct should, in various ways, and in various degrees, affect the welfare of others.

Instead of inquiring vainly into the reasons of what God has appointed, it befits us better, in the first place at least, to dwell attentively on

the awful responsibility under which we live—to contemplate the field of duty which is thus placed before us—and to impress our minds with the thought, that he who would ensure his own salvation, must not be unconcerned about the salvation of his neighbour.

It was doubtless with this view, that our Saviour, more than once, gave his disciples the admonition, "Ye are the salt of the earth:" signifying by this metaphor, that as salt is not only itself exempt from corruption, but is employed to preserve our food from corruption, so his disciples were required not only to be dedicated to Him as individuals, but also to be the means of purifying and preserving in a state of holiness the rest of the world.

Nor let any one suppose that this applies only to the individuals He was addressing; or, only to the especially-appointed Ministers of the Gospel. The Society which Jesus founded—the Church which "He purchased" (says Paul) "with his own blood," is a permanent Society, which He promised to "be with always, even unto the end of the world;" and every individual Christian is a member of that Society—

that "Body of Christ," as the Scriptures call it; and is bound, as such, not to live to himself alone, but to consider himself in connexion with the other members: "As the body," says Paul, "is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ; for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body." All Christians therefore are engaged, separately and collectively, in the service of Christ, and pledged at their baptism to walk in his steps, "who gave Himself," says Paul, "a ransom for *all*," that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." All Christians accordingly are exhorted both to love *one another*, *i. e.* to feel brotherly love towards their fellow-*christians*, as such,—and also to love all their fellow-*creatures*, even their enemies; to "do good unto *all* men; though especially to them that are of the household of faith."

And certainly no one, who truly loves his neighbour, and is disposed to do good to him, will neglect any means in his power of forwarding his salvation. You cannot, on Christian principles at least, seek to relieve the bodily

wants and increase the earthly prosperity of others, and yet remain indifferent as to their spiritual welfare; or fail to seize gladly every opportunity of promoting their religious improvement. All Christians accordingly are instructed by their Master to pray for "the coming of his Kingdom," *i. e.* for the diffusion and preservation of his religion, and the establishment of his empire in the hearts of its professors. And if you pray in earnest, when you say "thy kingdom come," you will not seek for excuses that may exempt you from serving your Master's cause, but for opportunities of testifying your zeal in it. For you cannot hope that God will hear your prayers, if you will not hear them yourself. There are but very few, who, if they are heartily disposed to it, have it not in their power, in some degree, to promote the spiritual benefit of others; and a true Christian will *then* only cease to labour for that object, when it is *not* in his power.

Various are the ways, and various the degrees, in which different Christians are enabled, and, *consequently*, *bound*, thus to promote the eternal interests of others; but there are

few, if any, who may not give some such testimony of their love towards Christ, and devotion to his cause. Every man's example is of some consequence, more or less, to his neighbours; every one therefore is called upon to "let his light shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven;" and thus to do good by his example, as far as its influence extends. Those again, who have families, may do much for them by adding to the influence of example, that of steady and judicious discipline.

And I earnestly entreat you not to satisfy yourself with contributing money towards the diffusion of religious light,* without studying, yourself, to "walk as children of the light;" lest, after having thus "preached to others, you yourself should be a castaway." If you do not apply to your own heart and life the evangelical doctrine, which through your means is conveyed to others, it will be better at the last day, for *them* than for you. "If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?"

* See Note at the end of this Sermon.

Yet do not, again, suppose that any religious feeling can be genuine, which does not make you eagerly desirous of *extending* the knowledge of the truth, not only to your family, but to your neighbours, to your countrymen—and as far as possible to your fellow-creatures.

Now there is no way in which a man can be so *extensively* useful, as by the diffusion of religious *knowledge*. Admit that Christian knowledge is but a part, and that the least part, of evangelical religion, still it is not only one essential part of it, but it is the one which we can the most extensively diffuse. It is but a small number that each of us can edify by his example, and a still smaller, that he can control by his authority; but he may contribute to promote a wide diffusion of religious instruction. And how well soever he may do his duty by those immediately around him, he must not think this enough, if more can be done in the service of Him, who "will have all men," (says Paul,) "to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." No true disciple of such a Master can be indifferent about adding to the numbers

of such disciples;—no one can duly value, or duly profit by, the light of the Gospel shed upon him, who is not anxious to spread the illumination as far as possible over the world.

There are some indeed, who object to the diffusion of knowledge as a dangerous gift, on account of the mischievous abuses to which it is liable.* The danger cannot be denied: and though it argues extreme weakness to make that a reason against bestowing the gift (since *all* advantages are liable to such abuse, in proportion to their value and importance), it *is* certainly a reason for using every exertion to counteract the danger. This danger is not one that *can* be counteracted by keeping the mass of the people in ignorance, were that possible, and otherwise desirable. Man's corrupt nature would of itself lead him astray, without needing the aids of learning. If a man be unable to

* My sentiments on this subject are fully developed, in a Discourse published by me not long ago, on "The Duty of those who Disapprove of the Education of the Lower Orders, as Dangerous;" and also in the latter part of Lecture viii. on "Political Economy."

read, he will still have ears to hear all the evil that may be instilled into him by bad company; either through the mischievous publications read by them, or from the devices of their own corrupt minds; and he will be far less capable of judging fairly concerning what he hears. I may safely appeal to all who have experience on the subject, whether the most illiterate are not in general far less acquainted with their *duty*, than with every species of *vice* and profligacy. No ignorance can secure a man from temptation; and certainly ignorance will not qualify him to resist it, or to discriminate between truth and error. It is surely in the darkness rather than in the light, that one thing is likely to be mistaken for another.

But it is our especial business to guard against danger, as far as we can, by placing within the reach of our poorer brethren who are able to read, something that they may read with advantage, and which may serve as an antidote to the poison, both of noxious publications, and of noxious conversation, and evil example. It is for us to set the truth, as far as we can, fairly before them: if it be, in itself,

superior to falsehood, those who are rightly disposed will embrace it; and those who are not, we should vainly hope to secure from error and sin by keeping them in ignorance. The tempter will always find means to deceive those who are willing to be deceived.

With respect to the books which it is desirable to circulate, it may be worth while to observe (without entering at large into the controversies that have long prevailed), that though, if we were reduced to make choice of *one* exclusively, the Bible, as far as it can be introduced, ought doubtless to be that one, yet where no such restriction is imposed on us, we should be most unwise to limit ourselves to the distribution of the Scriptures alone. If several persons, who agree in making the Scriptures their standard, but who have deduced each a different system of religion from the Scriptures, unite together for the propagation of religious knowledge, they must, necessarily and consistently, confine themselves (as a body), to the distribution of the *one* book, which they all *agree* to acknowledge. And when the members of our (we trust) pure and apostolical Church,

combine their efforts in the holy cause, there is precisely the *same* reason that *they* also should propagate the doctrines of the Church which they *agree* in acknowledging.

As for the arguments which have been adduced, that if our religion is true, it will be found in the Bible, and that therefore the Bible alone need be circulated and read, it is not necessary to discuss them; because those who have held such language, appear to have done so merely for the sake of argument, without being themselves at all convinced by it. At least I never heard of any denomination of Christians, who disapproved of the publication and perusal of Scriptural-commentaries, and other treatises, which set forth religious views conformable to their own. Now a man who thinks this or that a *useful* religious book, cannot but think it desirable, and even a duty, to distribute it; and if two or three *agreed* in their views respecting it, they could have no scruple in *combining* to distribute it. Surely, therefore, if two or three thousand, or two or three hundred thousand, have the same agreement, there can be no reason why they should not feel bound to act

in the same manner. If our religion is *not* true, we ought to *change* it; if it is true, we are not only authorized, but bound to propagate what we believe to be the truth; provided we do not teach any thing as a necessary article of faith which is not to be proved from Scripture; nor attempt by any violent or unfair means to prevent others from a reasonable freedom of speech and of pen, in circulating what *they* believe to be truth; but demand, and grant, a fair hearing for both sides. The distribution, and the study, of the Bible alone, or of any part of it, without note, comment, or exposition of any kind, are, each, the best thing, because the *only* thing, to be done (*in concert*) by such as are not agreed, either as to the explanation of Scripture, or as to the unlimited right of the laity to study it. But that the distribution of the Bible alone is the best mode of circulating religious knowledge, when (as is now the case) we have it in our power to provide at the same time oral and written explanations of it, such as we believe true, and which *some will* receive;—this is not only untrue, but is practically contradicted by all who preach, or

publish, or write, or read, any exposition of the Scriptures.

We may combine, when we find it advisable, with those, who in many points differ from us, in travelling together, as far as our road is the same; but we must not therefore suppose, that where the roads branch off and separate, we are come to our journey's end. It would be thought absurd to prefer total darkness to the glimmer of the faintest twilight; and no less so, to prefer, *when the choice is before us*, the twilight to the full blaze of day.

The mere *power* of *reading* the Scriptures hereafter, when that is *all* we can impart, is better, I think, than total inability; the knowledge again, however slight, of a *part* of Scripture, is better than ignorance of *all* parts; the Bible alone without explanation, is better than no Bible, when *that* is the alternative; but whenever it is in our power, by providing schools for some, catechists for others, and instructive books again, for others, so as to lead some at least, and each, as far as each *can* be led, not only to *read* the Scriptures, but to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,"—if,

when this is possible, we despise the conferring of such a benefit on some, because we cannot extend it to *all*, we are shutting out the light of the sun, because in the night we must be content with the faint beams of the moon.

Never let us be satisfied that we have done *enough* for our Christian brethren, while there are any, for whom we could do *more*.

As to the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, to which our Church every where appeals and refers, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," it should be remembered that their divine truths are irregularly scattered up and down the Sacred Books, and no where systematically taught. Neither the whole collection, which we call the Bible, nor any one Book of it, contains any thing like an *elementary introduction* to our religion, calculated to instruct beginners in the first rudiments of the faith; every Book of the New Testament having been written (as is most evident), not for the use of such as were utter strangers, or nearly so, to the Gospel, but for the use of those who had been long before converted to Christianity, and assiduously and gradually instructed and catechized,

and then carefully examined, and then baptized into the Faith. These Books therefore contain no regular system of early Christian instruction, suited to convey the first rudiments of Christianity to learners; which would have manifestly been unsuitable for the persons to whom they were addressed. And yet, of course, instructions of this kind *are* needed, both oral and written, compiled from, and built on the Scriptures: and should be furnished by the members of the Church, founded, principally, for that express purpose.*

Especial admonitions and explanations also, on various particular points of religion and morality, are needed at different times and places, according as the occasion calls for them; which need it behoves all the "members of Christ" to supply from time to time; each, according to the means within his reach for the edification of his Christian brethren; even as Paul continually exhorts his converts to teach, exhort, and admonish each other. And the importance and necessity of all this, with a view

* See "Dissertation on Tradition," by Rev. Dr. Hawkins.

to the religious instruction of the world, is (as I lately observed) attested by the practice even of those who profess to advocate the distribution of the Bible alone. Whenever they preach, or listen to, or write, or circulate, or read, any thing on religious subjects, beyond the actual words of Scripture, they are bearing witness to the truth of what I have been saying.

When then (as is now the case) a way is opened,—a plan laid down—by which even those of slender means may do something, and something effectual, towards the advancement of Christ's kingdom and the salvation of souls, by helping to propagate Christian-knowledge, it may be expected that every Christian, who is at all worthy of the name, will be anxious to have some share in the great work, and to engage in the same cause, for which Jesus Christ lived and died. No such Christian will be contented with rejoicing that the cause is likely to prosper without his aid; on the contrary, he would be mortified at not being able to be a partaker in the cause; and he will rejoice that his small services should be accepted. God's kingdom

must come, and his will must be done, in his good time, whether we are engaged in his service or not; but he that is not zealous himself to *do* that will "shall not" (says our Lord) "enter into that Kingdom."

We ought, indeed, to regard it as a high honour, and be thankful for the blessed privilege, that God should vouchsafe to allow us to be his instruments, and should call on us to employ ourselves in his service. And however insignificant in itself may be the service or the contribution of any individual of you, my brethren,—how much soever it may be lost to fame, and imperceptible amidst the mass, you may be assured that the Searcher of hearts will estimate aright the power and the will of each of you; for "He is not unrighteous, to forget your work, and labour that proceedeth of love." He will hear the secret petitions of those whom you never saw, but whose salvation may have been furthered by you, when they pray for their *unknown* and undistinguished benefactors. And before his judgment-seat, at the last day, you will meet them, in the presence of assembled mankind; when it will be known, and openly

proclaimed, who those are that have exerted themselves, however humbly and obscurely, to bring home Christ's sheep into his fold: and "their Father, which seeth in secret, will reward them openly."

NOTE TO PAGE 347.

This Sermon was delivered on the occasion of a collection made in aid of the "*Association for Discountenancing Vice and promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion*:" a Society incorporated by Royal Charter, and having in view similar objects, generally, with the "Christian-Knowledge Society" in England, except that in addition to the circulation of Bibles, Prayer-books, and other religious publications, at reduced prices, the "Association" also affords aid to numerous schools.

The revenues of this important institution, however, have been latterly so much diminished as to threaten its entire extinction; chiefly from the Government-grants, which it formerely received, having been discontinued. It is above two years ago that I succeeded, after much solicitation, in obtaining for it a grant of 3000*l*., which it was declared must be considered as final.

With a view to supply, in some degree, the apprehended deficiency, collections were made in aid of the funds of the Association,—accompanied by sermons setting forth its claims to support,—in most of the churches in the Diocese; on which occasion the foregoing Discourse was delivered by me, at Peter's Church, in Dublin: and it is designed that a similar appeal shall be made in November of this year. But these, and the other exertions made by the members of the Society, have not so far succeeded as to hold out even a prospect of adequate subscriptions being raised.

The unhappy situation of the Irish Clergy,—hitherto its principal supporters,—has compelled many of them, most reluctantly, to withdraw their contributions; and unless aid be afforded by the fellow-members of our Communion in

England, there is little hope that the institution can continue its useful labours.

It is hoped that the appeal thus now made to those our brethren of the Established Church (many of whom probably have been hitherto ignorant even of the existence of the Association) will not be made in vain; but that they will testify their good will to the cause of their religion in Ireland, not by mere empty professions, but by affording effectual and timely assistance.

Messrs. Hoares, Bankers, Fleet-street, London, have kindly undertaken to receive Subscriptions towards the funds of the Association.

SERMON XIV.

MATTHEW XII. 15.

Great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all.

EVERY circumstance recorded of our Lord's life on earth, is deserving of the most minute attention: not only because both the Person, and the purpose for which He came, were so extraordinary and important, but also, because his personal ministry was very short; and of the transactions of that brief space, but a very small portion is *recorded.* If any one is ever disposed to feel that this or that transaction or observation which we find in the Gospels, is not of sufficient consequence to deserve a very attentive study, he should recollect, that every one we do find

there, is one out of a thousand—is *selected* by the writer as being, in *his* eyes, at least, peculiarly striking, out of a multitude of other sayings and events which he has omitted. The Evangelist John remarks, (what we might easily have conjectured if he had not,) that "many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; and that if they were written every one, the world itself would not contain the books that would be written." But to have given only as full an account of the transactions of those few years, as writers usually do of matters so important, must have occupied, we may be sure, more than ten times the space of the histories we actually have. *These* contain, evidently, only a very brief *selection* of what was said and done during that short but most momentous period. It is, therefore, the more important for us to spare no pains in learning all we can from the little that *is* recorded: ever remembering, that when we are making the inquiry, what is to be learned from this or that passage, we are to consider not merely why such and such an occurrence *took place*, but also why it was *selected for mention*,

in preference to a hundred others that are passed by.

It should also be remembered, that, as Jesus had many great objects to accomplish during his short ministry, and was "straitened," He tells us, till all "*was* accomplished;" so, many of the things He said and did, were designed to answer *several different* purposes at once. And this makes it the more important to dwell attentively on each of the (comparatively) few things that *are* recorded of Him.

His miracles, for instance, were designed, in the first place, and chiefly, to testify his coming from God: "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." But they answered other purposes besides: most, if not all of them, had some reference to his teaching, and were calculated to explain or enforce something He had taught, or intended to teach, respecting his religion; and besides this, as much the greater part of them were of a beneficent character, these answered the purpose also of relieving the particular distresses of the particular persons on whom they were wrought. But there was a more important purpose still in this

beneficent character of his mighty works: they serve as an instructive example to Christians—they form a portion of that pattern which He set before us, "that we should follow (says Peter) his steps:" that we should learn of Him "who went about doing good," to "love one another, even as He loved us." The *miraculous* powers, indeed, which He left with his Apostles, have not descended to us; but as we, no less than they, owe all we do possess to his bounty, we are no less bound than they, to employ the means we have in benefiting our fellow-creatures. As the situation is reversed, so we must reverse in like manner what was said by Peter and John when they healed the cripple at the Temple-gate—"Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that give I unto thee."

To say, however, that beneficence is a Christian duty, and that we cannot be followers of the example of Jesus without practising it, may seem too trite and obvious a remark to be dwelt on. This, however, is not all that may be, by attentive observation, learned from what is told us of our Lord's works of mercy. We may also learn something, I think, as to the best *mode* of

practising our charity. There is charity in relieving the poor in various ways—in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, when mere *want*, unconnected with any other affliction, constitutes their claim upon our compassion; as well as in ministering to the sick, or to those disabled through sickness: and yet it is remarkable that, as far as the histories inform us, Jesus employed his miraculous power, in the one way, continually, and in the other, only twice. Two occasions only are recorded of his miraculously multiplying food; when He fed five thousand, and again four thousand, with a few loaves. It appears that He not only did not, on other occasions, feed by miracle the multitudes who resorted to Him, but did not even support, in this way, the disciples who were in constant attendance on Him, or otherwise employed by Him. When He sent forth the seventy disciples to preach, empowering them, at the same time, to work miracles in healing the sick, and cleansing the lepers, and relieving those possessed with demons, he gave them no power to provide even sustenance for themselves, but left them to be maintained by casual hospitality—"into whatsoever house ye

enter, eat such things as are set before you; for the labourer is worthy of his hire." And on all occasions, He and his attendants seem to have been supplied with the necessaries of life, by the contributions of such disciples as had the means: as you may read in the 8th chap. of Luke, of "certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary Magdalene, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to Him of their substance."

This conduct of his must have appeared the more striking, from the very circumstance of his distinctly pointing out, by means of those two remarkable miracles of the loaves and fishes, that this was with Him a matter of *choice*. Had such a notion occurred to any one as that of a limitation in his miraculous powers—that He could work *some* miracles and not others—the suspicion must have been completely removed by his multiplying food on those two occasions. The power *then* displayed served to mark his deliberate design in abstaining from any like procedure on other occasions; and it was marked still more by his directing the disciples, on each

occasion, to take care and " gather up the fragments that remained, that nothing might be lost." This, besides other objects proposed by it, sufficiently indicated his not designing ordinarily to *repeat* the miracle. On the other hand, we not only read, on many occasions, of his healing the sick, and curing the blind, lame and deaf, in great numbers, but we meet with no instance of any one's applying to Him for a cure *without* obtaining it. We are even led to suppose that none were ever refused, by such passages as that in the text, where it is said, that of the great multitudes who followed Him, " those that had need were *all* healed ;" and again, (in Luke ix.) that " He healed them that had need of healing ;" and so also, He is described (in Acts x.) as one who " went about doing good, and healing *all* that were oppressed of the devil." The only ground on which any seem to have been shut out from these benefits, was, unbelief: those who, when sufficient proof had been set before them of his miraculous power, yet rejected his assistance, and had not " faith to be healed," appear to have been the only sufferers who were *not* healed.

Now some reason there must have been for this remarkable distinction as to these two classes of our Lord's miracles, and for its being recorded in the histories designed to instruct us. And the reason, I conceive, was this—there can be no doubt that if Jesus had habitually, or frequently, used his miraculous powers in feeding the hungry, He would have been continually surrounded by multitudes anxious (as we find they were on one of those occasions) "to take Him by force to make Him a king;" and that He would thus have been the means of drawing off the greater part of the population in those countries from their ordinary employments by which they gained their bread, when they found bread provided for them, by miracle, without any labour on their part. Instead of which, after He had fed them, we are told, "He sent them away;" not allowing them to remain in expectation of a daily renewal of the like miracle.

But it seems at least probable, that in making the relief of the sick his constant and habitual exercise of beneficence, and the feeding the hungry, only occasional, our Lord did also design to afford us some instruction from his example,

as to the mode of our charity. Thus much, at least, we shall find is certain—that the reasons for this distinction are now, and ever must be, the same as at that time.

The distinction I mean is this—all the distresses and wants of men which can be relieved by their brethren, may be regarded as coming under two classes; the first comprehending, not merely hunger, but all the wants which depend merely and wholly on *poverty*; the other comprehending not only sickness, but all such destitution as is the result both of sickness and of every description of casual infirmity—such as blindness, dumbness, idiocy, lunacy, and the like.

Now, the relief of distresses of this latter class, has plainly no tendency to *increase the want* of such relief. Careless and uninquiring bounty may, indeed, induce impostors to *feign* sickness or infirmity, for the sake of imposing on the credulous; but the number of those really sick or helpless is evidently not increased, but rather diminished, by the aid afforded them. On the other hand, the relief of mere poverty—the supply of food, clothing, and the like, to all that

are in want of them—if this be done, not occasionally, and in certain peculiar cases, but regularly and indiscriminately—such charity so distributed must manifestly tend to multiply its own objects. It could not fail to happen but that vast multitudes would forsake their usual occupations, and cease to work, when they found that they could be maintained in idleness. If the funds, for instance, of any hospital, or any institution of a like nature, were to be turned aside from their present object, and laid out in providing, as a free gift, abundant food and other necessaries for all who were in want of them, I am not sure that as much *immediate* gratification would not be afforded to the then objects of the charity as at present; but it is plain that the funds, were they ten times greater, would quickly be exhausted; while they would have been expended in impoverishing the Public by robbing it of so much useful labour—by converting those who now work for their maintenance, into dependents on charity. To relieve, in short, indiscriminately *all* who are in want, and who choose to apply for relief, must have the effect of reducing multitudes to beggary.

And the number of such claimants would continually increase; and increase at a greater and greater rate, till they exceeded the possibility of supply.*

Although, therefore, the relief of mere poverty is undoubtedly a most important Christian duty, such relief should be warily bestowed, and in some peculiar cases; such as those of a specially deserving object—or of one suffering unusual hardships—or of one who has been in better circumstances, and has been reduced to poverty

* To those engaged in that important and inexhaustible subject of inquiry, the internal evidences of Christianity, it will be interesting to observe here, one of the instances in which the superhuman wisdom of Jesus forestalled the discoveries of the philosophers of these later ages, when advancing civilization has gradually extended man's knowledge, and developed his mental powers. Enlightened views of political economy, applied as they have been by Dr. Chalmers, and other modern writers, to the judicious regulation of beneficence, are, even now, but very little understood by the great majority, even of the educated classes; and yet, at a remote period, and in one of the least advanced regions of the then civilized world, we find a Galilæan peasant giving a practical lesson, pointing to an important principle, which, obvious as it is when distinctly stated, has been often overlooked, not only by the generality of men in more civilized times and countries, but by the most experienced statesmen and the ablest philosophers.

by unavoidable misfortunes. It is quite otherwise with the relief of sickness, or such calamities, and the distress thence resulting; if we are careful but to guard against *imposture*, both in respect of the reality of the sickness, and the destitute condition of the sufferer, there is no other danger to be apprehended from the most unbounded liberality. Our charity has, in this case, no tendency to multiply the distressed objects; nor can it ever be said, that even *enough* has been done in this way, while there is a single poor person in want of medical aid, and unable to procure it, or in a state of destitution arising out of sickness.

Those who have hardly ever known disease, are apt not to be sufficiently grateful for the blessing of health. You certainly are *not* showing your gratitude for it, if you do not contribute liberally, according to your means, towards the relief of the sick, and those enfeebled and impoverished through sickness—towards the relief, *i. e.* of those whom the Giver of your health calls his *brethren*, and which He declares He will consider as bestowed on Himself: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one

of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

And those again who have experienced sickness, and have been able to command a supply of medicine and other attendance, and have been exempt from the aggravation of consequent poverty, are not showing their gratitude for *these* blessings, if they are not anxious to impart to their poorer brethren a relief even more important in many cases than they have received themselves. I say *more important*, because many of you probably have had to endure in sickness merely the personal bodily affliction; whereas the poor man has often the additional distress of *want* consequent on sickness; he is often, even for some time after his recovery from the immediate attack of disease, disabled by it from maintaining himself, and perhaps a wife and children, by his labour.

The Institution for which your contributions are now called for—not for its support, but for its foundation—is, as most of you probably are aware, designed for the relief, in particular, of this last-mentioned kind of distress. The admirably conducted hospital, with whose officers

the design originated, affords, in common with several others in this city, free medical attendance, of the best kind, to the sick poor. But if the poor man is dismissed from this hospital as no longer a fit object for such attendance, being either pronounced incurable, or (which much oftener happens) cured, as far as medical or surgical skill are required, but weakened by long sickness and confinement, or, perhaps, by painful surgical operations; in a state to require rest, and a better supply of food and clothing than what the generality of the labouring classes can obtain, even by hard labour, but unable to earn even these—half-clad, and with the prospect of being half-starved; and, in addition to all this, having perhaps to travel (since this hospital admits patients from all parts of the country) a long distance to rejoin his friends and connexions; what must be the result, but that after having been saved from the severest attack of disease, through the bounty of the founders of the hospital, he must, in the condition of a convalescent, relapse, and perish miserably through cold and hunger? He must be like a shipwrecked mariner, whom, by the most laborious

and judicious exertions, we should have saved from perishing in the waves, and then left unaided to die of exhaustion on the beach.

When such a prospect is vividly presented to the minds of the medical attendants, they cannot but feel reluctant to dismiss a patient whose cure may, in fact, be complete, except as far as rest, nourishment, and good clothing and shelter, are required, to restore complete health; but who, they know, must, if at once turned out unaided, fall a victim to the want of these, and thus render all their past care and skill useless waste. Yet, on the other hand, every patient retained under such circumstances, must exclude some other waiting for admission; whose life perhaps depends on such medical or surgical treatment as he cannot otherwise obtain.

And when you consider that there are, on an average, about two hundred patients on the books of the hospital, and that many are almost always waiting for a vacancy, in the utmost need of the most skilful attendance, you may easily calculate how many lives may be annually saved, and what a mass of misery relieved, by such a charity as this—by an institution which shall

thus add so much efficiency to the hospital; in enabling it to bestow its own proper assistance on a greater number of those who are in the most need of it, without undoing its past works of kindness, by leaving those brought to a state of convalescence to fall back and perish through destitution.

It is proposed, therefore, to raise a fund for providing for the discharged patients, necessary clothing, made up by the labour (at a low price) of such inmates of the hospital as are capable of it; and also for supplying them with immediate subsistence, and with the means of reaching their homes, and of enabling them to earn their bread.

The extreme destitution in which, for want of such supplies, many wretched objects have been compelled to leave the hospital, with little prospect but that of perishing through exhaustion and want, after having been discharged as cured, has induced the medical officers of the institution to contribute, with the liberality which characterises that profession, towards providing, though but inadequately, towards their relief. It is plain, however, that the duty of affording such relief does not rest with *them* at all more than

with us; though their feelings are naturally more interested by the misery which presents itself to their senses. But if you are at all under the guidance of your reason, and not merely of your senses,—of Christian principle, and not merely of feeling,—you will perceive, on reflection, that we ought to be ashamed of leaving to this small number of benevolent persons the accomplishment (even if they could, which is impossible, accomplish it fully) of a good work, which is equally incumbent on ourselves.

But it is a disadvantage which institutions of this kind have to struggle against, that most of those by whose contributions they are to be supported, never *see* the objects of their bounty. The most eloquent description of an industrious man, who has been supporting himself, and perhaps his family, by incessant labour and frugality, cut off from the power of continuing his exertions, by debility consequent on disease, needing more, when he can procure less, and perishing, perhaps, when on the very threshold of complete restoration, for want of a little timely relief: while his widow, perhaps, and children, suffer the additional affliction in their bereavement, of

feeling that he might have been preserved to them if proper means could have been used; and then, again, the opposite picture of the poor man sent back, with renewed health and strength, to the honest labour by which he maintained his family, and of the double joy of himself, and those dependent on him, for the restoration,—all this, I say, if it were described with the most touching eloquence, even to those of the most lively imagination, could never have the same effect as the actual beholding of such scenes with their own eyes. But many have no opportunity, and some others persuade themselves that they have none, and do not seek any opportunity, of visiting the distressed poor, and seeing them with their own eyes; and some carefully avoid it, because it would give them uneasiness and disgust; and thus it is that there is considerable truth in the common saying, that half the world do not know how the other half live.

Unfortunately, too, it happens that much of the distress, and apparent distress, which we can hardly avoid seeing, because it is purposely obtruded on our notice—that of street-

beggars—is precisely that which calls for the most cautious and judicious inquiry in relieving it.

Those who are the *least* accustomed to visit the afflicted, to inquire into and examine their situation, and to exercise a deliberate judgment in administering relief, are at once the most moved, because they are under the guidance of their senses rather than of reflection, by any spectacle of misery and tale of distress that does come in their way—the most easily deceived (through inexperience), when it happens that the spectacle and the tale are framed by a practised and artful mendicant—and the most ready to relieve their feelings from the presence of a disagreeable object, as well as to satisfy their conscience, by bestowing alms on the applicant. Many a one flatters himself that he is exercising charity, when, in fact, he is chiefly intent on relieving himself. And thus, besides that those who, from having long made begging a trade, and acquired skill in dressing up fictitious tales, usually obtain the largest gains,—besides this,—such as *are* real objects of compassion have, in this way, their

relief distributed in the most irregular and ill-proportioned mode: some, perhaps, obtaining, from different persons, adequate relief several times over; while others, especially the most modest and simple, may perhaps obtain no sufficient relief at all, in this wretched kind of lottery.

What I have now been saying is by no means foreign to the subject immediately before us; because those who satisfy their conscience (as far as the duty of charity is concerned), or who expend nearly all they have to give, by relieving street-beggars, are thus prevented from contributing, or from contributing as much as they otherwise would, to charitable institutions which have a much stronger claim. I am far from saying that the casual distress, consisting in mere want, should not be relieved; but I do say, that it should not be relieved without such inquiry into the cases, and such cautious discretion (for which purpose there is a well-known and long-established institution in this place), as may secure our benevolence from being the means of enticing or detaining people

from their homes and their labour, to take up the wretched and demoralizing trade of begging.

What would you say of a man who should knowingly devote many thousands of his fellow-creatures to a life of squalid wretchedness—hopeless degradation — brutish ignorance, and worse than brutish profligacy; and this, not once for all, but generation after generation in perpetual succession?—their children, who may escape being destroyed by lingering tortures, purposely inflicted for the sake of making them pitiable objects, being brought up in the same state of degradation and vice as their parents? And what would you say of the *sin*—I say the *sin*—of any one who should contribute to keep up the number of these wretched victims, and perpetuate so vast an evil? Now, since it is plain that *if no one relieved beggars*, there would be *no such class of persons* as beggars, such *is* the *sin* of every one who does give alms to them; and such is the evil he will have to answer for having helped to keep up. For he who gives to a beggar does not even think to rescue him *from*

beggary, but encourages him to continue *in* beggary.*

Some, however, are accustomed to satisfy their conscience (a thing not difficult to do if

* I have heard it said, by way of objection to the Mendicity-Institution, that it serves no purpose, except to remove out of sight the loathsome, squalid, wretched-looking and indecent objects, that are ready to obtrude themselves on the senses of persons of refined and delicate feelings, who are glad to be freed from the pain and disgust of such exhibitions. Now, if this were a true statement,—which I am convinced it is not, but on the contrary, that the Institution tends to diminish mendicity and consequent misery;—but, if the statement were true, I would reply, that it furnishes no objection whatever. For it is surely some advantage to remove or lessen any kind of pain, or annoyance whatever, that tends to no good result; and the exhibition of squalid misery in the streets leads to none. Painful and disgusting spectacles of human wretchedness can then only afford a beneficial moral discipline when they lead the beholder to take steps for *remedying* that wretchedness; but that is not the case with regard to street-beggars. He who gives alms to any of these, well knows that the very same disgusting and wretched-looking objects will in all probability be found near the same spot the next day, and the day after, in the very same condition: nay, he must know that the very alms he gives must contribute to *induce* them to keep up the same squalid appearance, on which they find their earnings depend. Now, surely, there can be no moral benefit produced by the exhibition of human beings in a state of loathsome degradation, from which the alms bestowed neither rescue, nor are even *designed* to rescue them.

we are intent on doing it), by saying, "It is not *my* fault if the tale of distress told to me is untrue, but the fault of the impostor; my charity is equally meritorious if I *intend* to relieve real distress;" as if they were not bound, for conscience' sake, to take any pains in ascertaining whether they are doing good or mischief. But that you are deceiving yourself if you allow of such an excuse, you may easily be convinced, by putting a case where you are really in earnest—where your most important *worldly* affairs are concerned. Suppose, for instance, that some agent, intrusted with the management of your property, were to make some purchase with your money, or embark you in some speculation, on the ground that the parties interested in it gave an advantageous representation of it; he himself taking *no pains to inquire* whether it would be profitable to you or ruinous. If you thus incurred a heavy loss, would you excuse his gross neglect, on the score of good *intention*? or would you show yourself far more vigilant and scrupulous in guarding against serious loss to yourself, than against the heaviest evil to your fellow-crea-

tures? Would you not show that your feelings of self-interest were far less easily quieted than your conscience?

Listen not, then, to those who would persuade you that all alms-giving does good to the giver, whatever it may to the receiver; and that it necessarily tends to cherish and exercise the virtue of benevolence. There is no moral benefit whatever in deceiving ourselves by fancying that we are practising a virtue, when in truth we are merely yielding to a present impulse, with the most utter carelessness whether our conduct produces good or evil to our fellow-creatures—such carelessness as we should be ashamed of in any case where our own pecuniary interest was at stake.

There is, indeed, a danger of the heart's being hardened, unless, while we pass by unregarded many miserable-looking beggars, we take care not only to give bountifully (according to our ability) to more deserving objects, but also to *see* something ourselves of the persons we do relieve. But opportunities are abundantly afforded, of which we ought to avail ourselves, for such an exercise of the benevolent feelings,

by many of the charitable institutions in this place, and not least by the one I am now advocating. Go and visit in person the objects I am now recommending to your charity, whom you will have contributed to preserve, not *in* beggary, but *from* beggary. It is no very profitable moral exercise of the feelings merely to bestow money on the half-naked and destitute, without even a hope or a thought of raising them out of that condition. But to see the distressed *rescued* through your bounty from destitution—his rags exchanged for decent and comfortable clothing, and himself restored to the condition of an independent labourer—this is indeed a spectacle which may improve the heart of the giver.

I have dwelt thus earnestly on this point, both because I think it needful to inculcate, as an important and much *neglected* Christian duty, that of *discrimination* in charity; and also because I am fully convinced that if every one would set aside what he now gives, or is every day strongly tempted to give, to street-beggars, and bestow this, or the half of it, on such institutions as the present, this and many other

most useful charities, both which now exist, and which might be in consequence established, would be in a flourishing condition, and would prevent an unspeakable amount of misery and vice, which the other mode tends to keep up and increase.

Whoever then makes use of his understanding, and reflects, as he is bound to do, on the several channels in which his charity may be directed, will not fail to perceive that an institution such as that for which your contributions are now solicited, has peculiarly strong claims. Those in particular who have not opportunities of personally visiting the poor, and distributing suitable relief themselves, have here an opportunity of bestowing what they are sure will be well applied—what will not only be secured from being wasted on improper objects, but will go further in the relief afforded to suitable objects, than in most other ways in which it could be bestowed.

It is proposed that a number of benevolent persons be enabled to form themselves into a committee for the purpose of superintending and insuring the judicious expenditure of the

funds; thus bestowing their time and care, as well as their pecuniary means, on this good work. And it is hoped that the system will be extended, and the example followed, in other places, till there shall have been universally provided, as an important subsidiary to hospitals, and to the great increase of their efficiency, regular *Institutions for the Relief of Convalescents and other Discharged Patients.**

* It has been said, that at some institutions the clothing bestowed on several of the wretched objects has been pawned or sold by them, in order to purchase spirituous liquors. On beings so hopelessly improvident, it is plain all charity of whatever kind must be wasted; since it is evidently impossible to afford them more than a temporary and ineffectual relief, while they are hastening to undo by their reckless habits any good we may have attempted to do to them. Such persons, therefore, we should never, if we could be aware of their character beforehand, even admit into an hospital; since no care or skill there bestowed could ultimately keep them from perishing; and they would have occupied, to no purpose, the room that might have been filled by more deserving objects.

But even under the best regulations, and with the most assiduous care, it must be expected that such cases as those alluded to will sometimes occur. Our consolation must be, that if the very small relief bestowed on three distressed objects should prove means of the ultimate preservation to only two,

Who does not wish success to such a plan? But be not satisfied with the hope that it may succeed, though *you* withhold all contributions except good wishes and congratulations. If a good work prosper without you, without you will the divine favour be bestowed on its promoters. Jesus Christ warns us that He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," not to those who have *wished* well to his brethren, but to those who have relieved them. He says not, "forasmuch as *it has been done*"—but, "forasmuch as *ye did it*—unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

Deeply indeed will a sincere lover of his Saviour grieve if he has not an opportunity of

or even only one of the three, the outlay would have been on the whole well repaid.

The objection to the practice of giving to street-beggars, is not that, in the majority of instances, it is INEFFECTUAL. If the pittance bestowed on each of ten beggars, were wasted, and *merely wasted*, on nine of them, while it effectually relieved severe distress in the tenth, our alms might be on the whole well bestowed. The objection to the practice, is, in the enormous *positive mischief* it does, in creating and keeping up a most wretched and demoralizing trade;—in short, in reducing multitudes to beggary.

taking some share in the good work of relieving the distresses of his brethren; and it is so ordered, that even the poorest, who have little or no money to bestow, will seldom be without the power, in some way or other, of doing kind offices. But if you are one of those who do possess something beyond the calls of your own immediate necessities, yet have but little to give, be not ashamed to give of that little; remembering, that He who commended the widow's mite, looks not to the amount of the gift, but to the heart of the giver.

Many, however, are accustomed to say, too hastily, that they cannot *afford* to give, or that they give as much as they can *afford*, without enough considering how much they contrive to afford for expenses of a very different kind—for costly dress—(perhaps often beyond their station in life)—for luxury and ostentation of various kinds; and then, afterwards, they give to the poor all that they can spare—spare, *i. e.* from their superfluous abundance — from that which they hardly know how to dispose of otherwise; instead of delighting to make some *sacrifice* for Christ's

sake, and to mark their love to Him, and to their brethren for his sake, by denying themselves some gratification of vanity or sensual enjoyment. Instead of fulfilling the precept, "seek ye *first* the kingdom of heaven," some persons rather reverse it, as if it had been, "seek ye *last* the kingdom of heaven, after every thing else has been amply provided for."

It is impossible to lay down any rule which will apply itself to each particular case. Each best knows his own circumstances: and his own heart he will *one day* know, though he may not know it now. The best rule, therefore, that can be suggested is, to look forward to *that* day; to consider attentively, not what you are most inclined to do *now*, but what article of expense you will look back to with most satisfaction at the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, and thousands of ages hence, and for ever: and then give bountifully according to your means, but "not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." Pray then that He will give you a kind, and liberal, and Christian heart—

the heart to feel highly honoured in your being thus made a fellow-labourer and companion of your Lord, in ministering to the wants of those He calls his "brethren;" and who has promised that what you shall have done for them, through love to Him, he will reckon as done unto Himself.

SERMON XV.

JAMES I. 27.

Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

THE words of this passage are, I believe, not unfrequently so misunderstood as to be perverted to a bad use. If they do not actually *lead* any one into a false notion of religion, they may at least tend, when the real sense of them is mistaken, to confirm in such a notion those who may have already adopted it.

Why should we be told by divines—a man may say—of the importance of religious knowledge, and of right faith? when the Apostle himself here places the whole of religion not in

any thing to be learnt, or to be believed, but in benevolence towards the afflicted, and a life of unblemished purity. He makes religion consist, not in faith, but in practice: must we not conclude from this that all questions about Christian doctrine are mere matters of idle speculation, and that a virtuous life is every thing? Must we not, in short, assent to the poet, who tells us—

> "For modes of faith let senseless bigots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

Though the want of sense and sound reason is often veiled by liveliness of expression and smooth versification, I can hardly think these lines would have been so often cited with approbation, and the absurdity of the principle they convey have escaped notice, had the application been made to any of the common concerns of life,—to any thing, in short, but religion. He who professes to hold good conduct as every thing, and the faith, correct or erroneous, from which it springs, as nothing, would probably never think of judging so of his own friends and acquaintance, in their intercourse with himself. Common sense would teach him to distinguish,

in his own case, between one who should do him a service from self-interested views, from the expectation of a return, or from ostentation, and desire of credit for generosity, and one who should do him the very same service from real benevolence of heart, or out of pure friendship. And the same common sense would teach him, if he would employ it in a case where religion is concerned, that the Searcher of hearts must at least equally distinguish the different motives and principles from which different men will often practise the same duties; one, perhaps, with no thought at all of conformity to the will of God, but for the sake of men's applause; another, with an expectation of earning Heaven for himself, and building a claim to divine favour on his own merits; another, from the impulse of mere feeling; and another again from love, gratitude, and veneration towards his Redeemer. Now it would be absurd to suppose all these to be alike in the sight of God, and equal in his favour, so far as their outward actions are the same. Common sense would never lead us to expect this, even if the Scriptures did not, as they do, so plainly teach us the reverse.

I doubt, however, whether the passage now before us ever did actually lead into such an absurdity any one who was not predisposed to adopt it. At any rate, if any one is led into an error by his interpretation of *one* text, which he takes no pains to compare with the rest of Scripture, the fault must be his own.

But the passage, as it stands in our version, certainly has, to the English reader, some difficulty, from the employment of the word "Religion," in a sense different from what it usually and properly bears. When we speak of "religion," we ordinarily mean by that word the inward principle or sentiment; that which (in relation to the *Christian* revelation) is by the sacred writers always called the "Faith." Any sort of outward conduct that may spring from such a sentiment — whether divinely-ordained observances, or superstitious rites, or virtuous actions—we never call the *Religion*, but the *fruits*, or the *duties*, or the *observances*, of the religion. The external actions may be a sign, and a consequence, of religious principle; but they can no more *be* the religious principle itself, than the motions of the limbs can be the same

thing with the heart or the lungs, which give life and activity to the whole frame; or than the motions of the hands of a watch, can be the mainspring that sets them in action. All this must be evident, even to any one who knows nothing of any language but our own. But it is worth while to notice, that the word which the Apostle James uses (θρησκεία*) which is here rendered "Religion," is never used to signify what WE call "religion;" but might more properly be translated "*religious exercises.*" It is applied to divine worship—observances, ceremonies, sacrifices, purifications; every thing, in short, that is practised by any one as a sign of his faith, and in compliance with the requisitions of his religion. We have no *one* word in English that exactly answers to the one in the original, so as to denote all these things collectively: and thence it was, I suppose, that our translators were led to use the word "religion" in a sense different from what is commonly understood by it.

If you keep this in mind, you will easily perceive the Apostle's drift in this whole passage. On looking back to the words immediately before

* See Note at the end of this Sermon.

it, you will see that he had been admonishing those who deceived themselves by being "hearers of the word," without any care to be "doers of it." But many of those he was addressing were prone to deceive themselves in another way, by supposing that they *were* doers of their religious duty, by their strict compliance with the observances and rites of the Mosaic law. For the persons the Apostle James* is addressing, were, you should remember, Jews; who, though

* See the 1st verse of the Epistle. It may be collected from various passages in the Apostolic Epistles, compared with the Acts, that while to Paul and Barnabas were especially committed the Gentile-converts, particularly those from among the *idolatrous* Gentiles, the rest were more peculiarly the Apostles of the "Circumcision," that is, of the Jews and Samaritans. (See Gal. ii. 7, 8.) All the Epistles accordingly of Paul (to Churches) were addressed chiefly to Gentiles; except that to the Hebrews, (probably the Hebrew-Christians at Rome) which is generally supposed, as it does not bear his name, to have been written and sent by Luke, or some other of his fellow-labourers, the Apostle supplying the matter of it.

There seems to have been also a flock which was more especially under the care of Peter, viz. the "devout Gentiles," —those who, previous to their conversion to Christianity, had renounced idolatry, and frequented the Synagogues. These, the class to whom Peter had been chosen first to preach the Gospel, in the house of Cornelius, appear to have been the persons to whom his Epistles were addressed. See 1 Pet. i. 1. and ch. ii. 10.

converted to Christianity, still adhered to the ordinances of that law; as indeed we know did all the Apostles themselves. It was allowable, and right, for them to keep up all these *national customs*, as such; to avoid giving needless offense to their brethren.* But then, they had the more need to be often reminded that these ordinances were no part of *Christianity;* and that if they thought, under the Gospel-dispensation, to earn God's favour, and to obtain the Christian promises, through these observances of the ceremonial law, they were fatally deceived.

This error so strongly infected many of the Jewish Christians, that they endeavoured, and (which seems to us very strange) with no small success, to impress the same notion on the Gentiles. This doctrine, first propagated, as it should seem, under the pretended sanction of the Apostles, (Acts xv.) who solemnly disavowed it, and proclaimed the exemption of the Gentile converts from the observances of the Mosaic law, was yet industriously taught for a long time after; and, among the Galatians particularly, appears to have made such progress as to have

* See Acts xxi. 20—25.

been the occasion of Paul's Epistle to that Church. It is with a view to guard against this error, that that Apostle so often and so earnestly contrasts "faith" in Christ, with "the works of the law," (Rom. ix. 32,) and speaks of having not his "own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," (Phil. iii. 9); censuring those who "go about to establish their own righteousness."

All these expressions of his are, indeed, by some readers of the present day, understood as having reference to what we now call *moral virtue*;—to works of righteousness in the sense of what are, in these days, considered as virtuous actions: as if the persons whose error Paul was combating, were such as pretended, or endeavoured, to justify themselves by the strict morality of their lives, and to merit heavenly happiness as a just reward of their virtue. But this notion, though it certainly is an erroneous one, was not that which the Apostle had in view. If, indeed, such an idea *had* prevailed in his time, he would, no doubt, have opposed it: since it would plainly

be a most unreasonable presumption for a mortal man, even should he lead a life of perfectly unsinning rectitude, to claim an immortality of exalted happiness as the natural consequence and just reward of his virtue. But in point of fact, this was not the claim that was put forward. The "works" by which the Pharisees sought "to establish their own righteousness which was of the Law," were, not the performance of moral duties, but *ceremonial observances*;* which, in fact, they were accustomed to regard as a substitute for "the weightier matters of the law,

* An error, very nearly the same, had crept in among us, to a vast extent, before the Reformation. "Good works" had come to signify, principally, if not exclusively, pilgrimages, fasts, genuflections, and ceremonial observances of various kinds; and hence our Reformers used much the same language as the Apostle Paul, with the same meaning, and on a like occasion.

Both were, indeed, well aware that virtuous actions can never give a man a claim to the Christian promises, independently of Christian faith; and also that the best actions—in themselves the best—are not acceptable in God's sight (indeed are not even morally virtuous at all) independently of the principle from which they spring. But it is a notorious fact, that it was *not* by virtuous actions—what are usually so called—that the Judaizing Christians, and the later corrupters of Christianity, sought to justify themselves, but by ceremonial observances.

judgment, mercy, and faith." (Matt. xxiii. 23.) So far from resting their justification on the strict morality of their lives, we find them not only repeatedly censured by our Lord for their gross immorality, but spoken of by Paul (Rom. ii. 17, 24,) as bringing a scandal on their religion in the eyes of the Gentiles, by their notorious violations of their moral law. (See Matt. xxiii. 14, 27.)

It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose that the error Paul was opposing, was that of men claiming to be "justified by *works*," in the sense of *moral virtue*,* independently of faith in Christ; and a still worse mistake (which appears to have arisen in the time of the Apostle James, (see ch. ii. 14,) and is probably alluded to by Peter also, (2 Pet. iii. 16,) to suppose that he was contrasting good works, in that sense, with faith. Faith in Christ, he is all along contrasting, not

* Such an error as *that* was at least as likely to exist among *Gentiles* quite unconnected with Jews: (see Essay i. § 11. First Series.) That Paul's cautions, therefore, against the notion of being "justified by works," are addressed *exclusively* to those churches which contained a great mixture of *Jews* and Judaizing teachers, is an additional indication of his real meaning.

with *Christian virtue*, but with the *Levitical Law*. The whole of that law was superseded by the Gospel: the ceremonial part of it being completely done away by the fulfilment of its types; while moral duties remain binding, not because they are enjoined in the law, but because they *are* moral.*

The Jewish converts, however, and many Gentiles led by them, were much inclined to cling to the ceremonial observances of the law, as a part of the Christian religion, or as superadding a more perfect saving efficacy to it. And this prevailing error, Paul and the other Apostles found it often necessary to advert to.

The Gospel-dispensation, then, the Apostle James calls, in the passage now before us, "the perfect law of liberty:" *perfect*, as contrasted with the imperfect and preparatory character of the Mosaic law; and a "law of *liberty*," as leaving men to act, not indeed according to their fancies and inclinations,† but on their own discretion, in a multitude of points which had been fixed by minute and particular regulations, under the old

* Essay v. § 2. Second Series.

† See Essay v. § 5. Second Series.

law. And these regulations being no longer binding on the conscience of the Christian, nor forming any part of his religion, it is thence called "the law of liberty."

Hence it is that our Lord said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free:" the Gospel which was the "truth" (i. e. reality) of what had been shadowed out and faintly represented under the law, would free his disciples from the yoke of those strict and minute regulations, and "carnal ordinances."

But what then (it might have been asked, and doubtless often was asked) what are the peculiar religious exercises of the Christian, as such? The Jew, it might have been said, has his ceremonies and observances, which point him out as a Jew, and testify his reverence for his faith: he wears peculiar garments, and abstains from certain meats, and uses certain ceremonial purifications, and the like. The Heathen worshipper, again, of each Pagan god or goddess, is equally punctual in his own observances of the festivals, sacrifices, and ceremonies of *his* faith: what then has the Christian, answering to all

these? What is his "*religion*;"* (in the sense in which our translators have here used the word,) his outward signs of being a Christian?

The extreme simplicity of the Christian worship must have often struck the Ancients (as indeed it does the Mahometans and Idolaters of the East, at the present day) as contrasted with the numerous and often splendid rites and religious observances of all others. The sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper, are very simple, not burdensome or elaborate ceremonies; and of these, one only was appointed to be observed repeatedly: the public worship was left to be prescribed and regulated in all its particulars, at the discretion of the governors of each separate church, in each country and age. No sacrifices, no peculiar meats, no incense, or outward sprinklings and purifications from legal defilement, to be repeated from time to time; no temple, except the hearts of the worshippers themselves; no priest, except their great High Priest in Heaven, were instituted in the Gospel-dispensation.† What then was each Christian,

* ΘΡΗΣΚΕΙΑ. † See Sermon IV.

in every age and country, to do *as* a Christian? By what outward acts and demeanour was he to testify that sense of religion which the Jew and the Pagan proclaimed to the world by their religious exercises and observances?

The answer was, by purity and beneficence, practised for Christ's sake. His followers were to be marked out by imitating his example of an unsullied life, and of active kindness, towards their brethren, towards strangers, towards enemies. "By this," said He, "shall all men *know that ye are my disciples*, if ye love one another;" and again (Luke xi. 41), "Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold *all things are clean* unto you." So also the Apostle instructs the Hebrews, (xiii. 16,) "To do good and to communicate, forget not; for *with such sacrifices* God is well pleased."

And thus speaks likewise the Apostle James, here, in answer to any who might be supposed inquiring what are the characteristic religious exercises and observances (the "religion," as our translation has it) of the Christian. "Pure religion," says he, "and undefiled before God and the Father" [our God and Father] "is this;

to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." It is no longer by visiting at stated times the Temple at Jerusalem, with offerings for Jehovah's altar there, that you are now to manifest your devotion to Him as manifested in Christ Jesus, but by visiting those whom He is pleased to regard as *Himself*; "Forasmuch as ye did it," says He, "unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto ME;" by visiting in their affliction the fatherless and the widow, and making an offering of your goods for their relief: it is not by avoiding the touch of things ceremonially unclean, or by abstaining from particular meats, or by outward sprinklings and purifications, that you are to present yourselves, now, as undefiled worshippers in the Lord's sight, but by "keeping yourselves unspotted from the world;" unstained in soul by its corruption, by covetousness, ambition, vanity, envy, resentment, sensuality, intemperance, and every sin into which intercourse with the world will be apt to seduce you: for "out of the heart," says our Lord, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit,

lasciviousness, an evil eye [i. e. envy,] blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and *they defile* the man."*

When the Apostle is describing the outward conduct that should characterize all Christians, and testify their inward feeling of devotion to their Lord, though he means, no doubt, to include *every* species of beneficence, he briefly illustrates his meaning by specifying some particular objects who are among those that have an especial claim to it, the "afflicted widows, and fatherless;"—the "orphans," as he expresses it: for "orphan," which is originally a Greek word, is the very one employed in this passage. And certainly those who have the misfortune to have lost their nearest natural protectors, have, when other points are equal, an especial demand on the benevolent protection of their fellow-christians generally.

Kindness in relieving the afflicted and needy, is, as I have explained, though not "religion" properly so called, yet a necessary fruit of pure religion. If the inward principle be right, and

* Mark vii. 21.

well-fixed, and flourishing, it cannot fail to lead to the outward actions which are the natural effects of it. And one who is truly and deeply impressed with Christian sentiments, will not merely hold himself *bound* to shew kindness and to do good, but will study anxiously how to do the *most* good. He will consider how to make his beneficent endeavours as effectual as possible.

There is a great difference in the different modes of bestowing our alms; and he who is charitable from right motives, will be curious and diligent in making his selection. But one who is led merely by feelings of compassion, without sound principle to guide him, may be led by those feelings to bestow gifts which will do more harm than good; or at least, much less good than a more judicious plan would have effected.

But many persons are accustomed, both in this and in other matters, to trust confidently that they are doing right as long as they follow the dictates of their heart; that is, resign themselves to whatever impression happens to be made on their feelings. We should remember, however, that the heart and the head both,—our feelings and our understanding alike,—are the gift of our

Maker, and ought to be, both, devoted to the giver; to be so regulated and so employed as shall be the most acceptable in his sight. And since all we have to give comes also from Him, the bestower of all things, to Him we shall have to render an account, as his stewards, not only of the amount of what we bestow, but likewise of our care in bestowing it to the best advantage, so that our charity may do the most good, and the least harm. He, indeed, who is without benevolence towards his poorer brethren, or who lets his benevolence evaporate in words, and scruples to deny himself any indulgence for the sake of being the better able to relieve them, will no doubt have a fearful account to render before Christ's judgment-seat at the last day: but neither benevolence, (i. e. the *feeling* of benevolence,) nor any other feeling, has anything virtuous in it, except when regulated and directed according to our best discretion, with a deliberate view to God's glory, and the real benefit of our brethren. In this, as well as in other points, "the heart of man is deceitful," and we are prone to flatter ourselves with the belief of possessing virtues which we have not.

To dwell with eloquence on the amiableness of compassionate sensibility, and the high merit of benevolent liberality, might be more gratifying perhaps, but would be far less useful, than to point out the danger we are liable to, of self-deceit, even in the practice of a duty, and the importance of directing, according to the best of our judgment, even the best of our feelings.

If you will make inquiry, as I assure you I have myself done, with the most anxious attention, into the character and management of the Institution* now recommended to your notice, you will find that there is no charity whose funds are more judiciously, more economically, and more effectively expended. The children who are the objects of it, are trained with a view to their becoming useful members of society, in their own humble sphere; and those who have had the best opportunities of observing, will bear witness that our efforts have been, in a great majority of instances, eminently successful.

* This discourse was delivered on the occasion of a collection in aid of the Female-Orphan-House; an asylum for the support and education of Protestant girls who have lost their parents, and are in a state of destitution.

And the peculiar description of children on whom this benefit is conferred, is such as to render their case doubly interesting. Parents do indeed often require the aid of their charitable fellow-christians for the support and education of their children. They are sometimes unable, and sometimes unwilling, to bring them up in the way that is best for them. But what must have been the situation of the children now before you, without the fostering hand of Christian kindness that has been held out to them? You, my brethren, are their only parents. If they were not protected, and brought up as children of the "household of faith," they would, most of them, have either perished through neglect and hardships, or have been now wandering through the streets in squalid wretchedness, reared in the midst of filth and degradation, ignorance, and brutish profligacy.

To rescue a fellow-creature from bodily want and suffering, is an office which the Christian who desires to tread in his Master's steps must delight in: but to bestow a rational and a Christian education on those who would otherwise, in all likelihood, have lived and died in the

darkest and vilest ignorance, is a benefit which as far surpasses the other as heaven is more than earth, and eternity than time. By contributing to the virtuous education of a destitute orphan, you may be the means of saving a soul. Nay, more; since "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," every young person whom we send out into the world practically imbued with genuine evangelical principles, may be the means of saving several others; may spread the influence of a good example; may cause a whole family to be "trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." You know not where the benefit may stop, of introducing even into an humble sphere of life any *one* well-instructed practical Christian; taught to render religion *respectable*, by combining it with orderly and industrious habits; and *amiable*, by gentle, quiet, and decorous manners.

That the children in this school *are* well instructed in their religion, I can personally bear witness: and that this, and all the rest of the instruction they receive, does not unfit them for the occupations and labours of humble life, but that, on the contrary, they generally prove well

suited to their proper station, is what, on inquiry of those best acquainted with the facts, you will find to be well ascertained.

It is, indeed, possible so to educate children as to disqualify them for an humble and laborious station in life: but this mistake does not consist so much in the *amount* of the knowledge imparted, as in the *kind*, and the manner of education. Habits early engrafted on children, of regular attention,—of steady application to what they are about,—of prompt obedience to the directions they receive,—of cleanliness, order, and decent and modest behaviour, cannot but be of advantage to them in after-life, whatever their station may be. And certainly their familiar acquaintance with the precepts and example of Him who, when all stations of life were at his command, chose to be the reputed son of a poor mechanic, and to live with peasants and fishermen;—or again, of his Apostle, Paul, whose "own hands ministered to his necessities, and to those of his companions;"—such studies, I say, can surely never tend to unfit any one for a life of humble and contented industry.

It is a mistake which still prevails to a wonderful degree, but which experience cannot but remove in time from those who will listen to experience, and understand how to profit by it,* that ignorance and degradation tend to keep the labouring classes innocent, and to make them orderly and good subjects. There are exceptions, of course, to every general rule; but *as* a general rule, none can be better established than this; that the most idle and profligate of both sexes,—the most rude and uncourteous in their manners,—and the most turbulent and rebellious, are to be found amongst the most illiterate and uneducated.†

With respect to this particular Institution, it ought to be known, that the Commissioners appointed not long since for the inspection of this and other Charities, were particularly well satisfied with its constitution and management; and that Government accordingly consented to afford aid to its funds on a plan which has always appeared to me the most judicious; viz.

* See Political Economy. Lect. iii. p. 64—71.

† See Sermon on the Duty of those who disapprove of the Education of the Poor.

by contributing a certain *proportion*. A *fixed* sum granted by Government to any Institution, has the effect, as experience has often shewn, of paralysing private charity; and still more, a Government-grant for the supply of the *deficiencies* of private charity: as, in that case, each person feels that he is contributing his donation to the public purse; since the more he gives, the less is the supply from Government. But, in the present instance, the plan is the reverse: Government engaging to supply a sum equal to what is raised by voluntary contributions, be that much or little. So that whatever you give, becomes by this means, in fact, doubled.

This circumstance renders it both the more gratifying to the supporters of this Institution to receive ample donations, and the more disheartening to find them fall short; especially as its funds have latterly been so scanty as barely to suffice, after every possible curtailment of expense, for the accomplishment of its objects.

For this then, as well as for the other reasons I have adverted to, I wish that your contributions

should be liberal. But I have abstained from dwelling as fully as might have been done on such topics as may have appeared the most suitable for effecting *that* purpose, because I conceive that the main object of every Christian minister's discourses ought to be the spiritual improvement of his hearers. The chief benefit of a charity-*sermon*,—as indeed of the very practice of charity itself,—is, that the *bestowers* should be enriched,—spiritually enriched,—by "pure religion, and undefiled," without any mixture of selfish, or vain, or otherwise worldly and carnal motives. For then (and then only) "it is," says our Lord, "*more* blessed to give than to receive."

I would not have you, therefore, give for fashion's sake, or with a view to the praise of men: I would not have you give with the thought of atoning for your sins by splendid donations, or of claiming, in proud self-sufficiency, a reward for your good work, — of establishing a claim on God's justice, by parting with a small portion of what He has bestowed on you: I would not have you give "grudgingly or of necessity,"—because you are afraid

to refuse; "for God loveth a cheerful giver:" and I would not have you give through the impulse of some transient feeling, awakened by impassioned eloquence, even if I possessed such a power. Had I been master of all oratorical skill, I would still have preferred the course I have taken; of endeavouring to explain and develop the sense of a passage of Scripture, and urging you to the performance of a Christian duty, on Christian principles, and on those only. And I would have you give with deep feeling of gratitude to the Bestower of all you have, not only for all the advantages of fortune and of education that you yourselves possess, but also for the honour He does you, in permitting you to have a share, whether great or small, in that glorious work for which your Master lived, and died;—in feeding his beloved flock; and for graciously promising to regard what is done — for His sake—to the least of these, as done unto Himself.

For, such, He has declared, will be his sentence on that great day when you, and these the objects of your charity, shall stand along

with countless millions besides, at his awful judgment-seat.

May you, and these, so act, this day, and every future day of your lives, as you will wish to have done on that last great day! May you meet on that day with joy: and may you hear the voices you have this day heard, raised, then, in grateful exultation to welcome your entrance into those regions of endless joy to which you shall have guided their steps.

NOTE TO PAGE 397.

I have known instances of pious Christians testifying alarm at the presumption of any one's venturing to translate a single sentence, or even word of Scripture, differently from the authorized version; and that, even in cases where the expressions used by our translators have, since their time, become obsolete, or come to bear a different signification.* We should wait patiently, they say, till it shall be deemed requisite to set forth an improved version, by authority. But this is surely to forget the *purpose for which* the received version was authorized; viz. to be publicly read in Churches as a part of the divine service. Any one would be justly blamed who, in *reading the lessons*, should *substitute* some different translation—even should it be in itself preferable—for the authorized one. But our translators, and the Government which gave its sanction to their work, were as far, I conceive, from having the wish, as they certainly were from having either the right, or the power, to preclude any one, whether in oral teaching or in publications, from expressing what he conceives to be the sense of any passage of Scripture, in such words as to him may appear best to convey the meaning of the original.

In fact, it must appear to any one, on a moment's consideration, a nugatory and fruitless distinction to allow men the right to *expound*, but not to *translate*;—to comment upon any passage in the Bible, as it appears in our *English* version, but not to employ any different word for the rendering of a

* This is particularly the case in respect of the words "shall" and "will."—See *Archbishop King's Discourse*, p. 476, Note.

Greek or *Hebrew* word;—to allow, in short, the right of private judgment as to the sense of the *translation*, but not, as to the sense of the original: thus, endeavouring to stamp our authorized version with the same sort of independent authority which the Romanists have given to the Vulgate Latin.

Of course, if either the *translation*, or the *exposition*, which any one gives, of any passage, be incorrect, in either case it is competent to others to refute him; or if, being a member of our Church, he has advanced any thing at variance with its doctrines, to proceed against him by appeal to the proper authorities. But to draw a distinction between one who gives his own version of a Greek sentence, and one who gives his own paraphrase of an English sentence, would manifestly be arbitrary and frivolous, and is warranted by no enactment of our Church.

But it has been contended by some, that, if an unlearned hearer, of a distrustful turn of mind, finds any doubt cast on the unerring fidelity of the translation of every sentence in our authorized version, his faith may become unsettled, and he may begin to doubt whether the translation may not be inaccurate throughout; and whether, since he cannot read the Scriptures in the original, he can rely on any one sentence in his Bible as containing the true meaning of an inspired messenger of God. Nay more: I would add, that if he should accordingly apply himself to the study of the ancient languages, and should then study the Scriptures in the original, he would find in several parts of them various readings, each supported by ancient manuscripts; and he might, on the same principle, proceed to doubt whether he could rely on any passage in the original, as free from interpolation or corruption.

The truth is, the danger in question is one that cannot be effectually guarded against, except by one course (for which there is a well-known precedent); viz. to set up the claim,—

and what is more, obtain admission for the claim,—of inspiration and infallibility lodged in our Church. For, if we acknowledge, or if men believe, without our acknowledging it, that our translators, and all other members of our Church, were fallible men, then, if we religiously abstain from ever expressing the sense of the original in any other words than those of the authorized version, even when these do not appear to us fully to convey the sense to readers of the present day; the result will be, that such a course of proceeding will tend rather to generate or increase, than to allay, an unreasonable distrust of the general fidelity of our version. To conceal from men that there have been differences of opinion as to the rendering of some passages, would be impossible, even if they had not before them (as they have) two different versions of the Psalms: and if they find that in every citation of Scripture, or reference to it, we always rigorously confine ourselves to the words of the authorized translation, we shall no longer be, each of us bearing his own *testimony* to the general fidelity of that translation. It will be understood that we employ those words, not *because* we are convinced that they faithfully convey the sense of the original, but because they are the words of the authorized version, which, whether we approve it or not, we dare not depart from, for fear of unsettling men's minds: and consequently the unlearned hearer, of that distrustful turn of mind above alluded to, may be led to doubt whether there is any one passage rightly translated, even in the opinion of the very preacher who cites it.

I am aware, however, that what has been said is not likely to have much weight with any who do not at once reject on principle every thing savouring of pious fraud,—every system of keeping up supposed salutary prejudices among the unlearned. It appears to me that *it is not given* to men even of the most acute intellect, to discover that honesty is the best policy, till they shall have adopted the honest course for its

own sake, and not from motives of policy. But those who shall have disdained all politic disguise, suppression of truth, and connivance at error, as intrinsically evil, derogatory to the cause of our religion, and indicating a want of faith in God; will afterwards find by experience that the most frank, manly, and straightforward course is also the wisest; and will have averted many of the very evils into which a timorous and crooked policy,—adopted through apprehension of those evils,—would have led them.

SERMON XVI*.

PHILIPPIANS I. 4, 5.

Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

THAT the apostle Paul considered it to be the design of his Master that a sufficient maintenance should be provided for the ministers of the gospel,—that he intended Christians to feel themselves strictly bound to contribute, when needful, to this object,—and that he warmly encouraged a disposition to come forward liberally with such contributions—all this is what no one even moderately versed in this apostle's writings can be ignorant of. But it would not

* Preached before the Additional Curates' Fund Society for Ireland, on Tuesday, the 5th of April, 1842, and published at the request of the Society.

appear at first sight to the English reader, that the particular passage now before us has any relation to that subject. The expression "your fellowship in the gospel," would naturally be understood, and I suppose must have been meant to be understood, as signifying the Philippians' having received the faith and become members of Christ's mystical body, "the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints." But on looking at the original, it will be seen, that the apostle's words cannot possibly bear that meaning. The real sense of the words undoubtedly is, not "your fellowship in the gospel," but "your contribution towards the gospel, from the first day until now"—this liberality in providing for the maintenance of the gospel-ministers being a virtue in which these Philippians seem to have been, both at first and ever after, especially eminent. It may be that they had been enabled to lend assistance in other ways also: that they had aided in the work of diffusing the gospel, or had afforded advice, encouragement, and consolation to its preachers, and had borne effectual testimony in their favour: but *contribution* to-

wards the gospel, of some kind or other, is plainly what the apostle is speaking of—and *pecuniary* contribution is the only kind distinctly specified in this epistle.

The word indeed which is translated "fellowship" (*κοινωνια*), does originally, and in the greater number of the places where it occurs, bear that signification: but the words which follow it in this passage plainly shew that it cannot here be used in that sense, but in another, which it also very often bears, that of "contribution;" that is, imparting – communicating—making another a *sharer* or *fellow*-partaker of what belongs to us'.

The same word and others of the same derivation, are in various passages used in this sense, and are so rendered in our version. For instance, in this very epistle, one of the objects of the apostle in writing it was, to acknowledge the receipt of a supply which the Philip-

[a] Κοινωνια εις το ευαγγελιον could not possibly have been used to express "fellowship in the gospel;" the preposition used being one that signifies not 'in' but 'to,' 'into' or 'towards:' so that the passage relates, as I have said, to "contribution towards the support of Paul and his fellow-labourers."

pians had just sent. (Ch. iv.) "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again—ye have well done that ye did *communicate* with my affliction:" [here the word in the original is akin to that in the text which I have rendered "contribution."] "Ye know also that in the beginning of the gospel no church *communicated* with me, [the same word in the original,] as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only: for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." This is evidently what he was alluding to in the opening of the epistle; "your contribution towards the gospel *from the first day* until now:" This he mentions as the ground of the *joy* which he describes himself as feeling on their behalf, viz. their kind remembrance of him: for the translation of a subsequent verse, as given in the *margin*, and not in the text, is evidently the right one; as it is plainly *their* having *him* in their heart, that he is dwelling on. The proper reading of the passage is, "even as it is meet for me to have this feeling towards all of you, on account of your having me in your heart."

And he concludes the epistle by adverting again to their late supply; "having received of Epaphroditus those things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

Again, the very word (κοινωνια) which I have been noticing in the text, is translated in 2 Cor. ix. 13, "your *liberal distribution* unto them:" And again, in the epistle to the Romans* it is rendered "to make a certain *contribution* for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."

And other passages to the same effect might be adduced, if there were any need.

Our authorized version is in general so faithful, that I have thought it the more desirable to notice the above mistranslation; especially as it is not noticed in the Commentaries which are in the hands of most readers. The error seems to have originated in the Latin version; with which our translators were so familiar as to have occasionally overlooked some of the (very few) errors it contains.

* Rom. xv. 26. and xii. 13. "*distributing* to the necessities of the saints," is a translation of the corresponding word.

From the passages I have referred to, as well as from many other portions of the apostle Paul's epistles, it is sufficiently evident that he considered a Christian Ministry as entitled, of right, to receive from the people such supply of their temporal wants as might be needful. And herein he is conforming to the declaration of our Lord himself, on the occasion of his sending out the seventy, that "the labourer is worthy of his hire:" thus indicating, that the hospitality offered them they were to receive not as mere ordinary hospitality, or as a charitable bounty bestowed on the destitute, but as an equitable debt due for their services. And his sanction of their receiving this kind of payment is the more remarkable, and must have been the more striking to the early disciples, from the experimental knowledge they had of their Master's power to provide supernaturally for his own wants and for theirs. There were two, and only two, extraordinary occasions on which He thought fit miraculously to feed a multitude with a few loaves. And it is remarkable, that on each of those occasions He most emphatically evinced, and called attention to,

his design of not ordinarily repeating the miracle, by his charge to "gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost."

Whatever other purposes were answered by his giving this injunction and by the result of it, this at least was plain, that He did not intend to provide a *daily* miraculous supply; else, the gathering up of the fragments would have been as unsuitable as the laying by of manna for the morrow, by the Israelites in the wilderness.

And as for the succeeding period, that in which inspiration was to cease, as Christian Ministers would then be called on to acquire by laborious study, some of that knowledge with which the apostles were gifted supernaturally, it is plain that it would have been even less fitting for the uninspired than for the inspired ministers, to have been wholly dependent for subsistence on secular labour, such as that by which, in part and occasionally, Paul supported himself.

We may further collect from this apostle's writings, as well as from other parts of Scripture, that the supposed community of goods which most persons believe to have existed in

the infant Church at Jerusalem, and the supposed obligation on all Christians to sell all that they had and give to the poor, must, if they ever existed at all, have been very soon superseded. But I have used the word "supposed," because the notions I have alluded to seem to me to have been taken up without any sufficient foundation.

It seems much more likely that the community of goods alluded to, existed among those only who were *engaged in the ministry* *.

Another conclusion which we may draw from the writings of this apostle, is, the danger which he conceived likely to arise from the maintenance of a Christian Minister by the voluntary contributions of his congregation. He seems to have been so strongly impressed with the importance of a minister's being exempt from all temptation of being influenced by the hope of pleasing, or the fear of offending, those among whom he exercises his ministry,—from all risk of being unduly controlled by them, or of incurring even the suspicion of such control,—that, at Corinth, and indeed

* See Note A. at the end.

throughout the whole province—"the regions of Achaia"—he found it necessary to come to the resolution of never receiving, himself, any pecuniary assistance whatever from the people. It was in those regions, it seems, especially, that he was chiefly exposed to "perils among false brethren;"—men who disputed his apostleship—who undervalued his person—who contended against his authority, and opposed his doctrine. And in order to bear up as well as possible against these trials, and to assert effectually his own just claims, as far as was required for the benefit of his converts, he found it necessary to preclude at once all suspicion of interested views, by contrasting as much as possible his own self-denying conduct with the covetousness of those opposed to him, and altogether refusing the remuneration that was fairly due to him. That it *was* due he steadily maintained; 1 Cor. ix. 1—7, and 11—15.—"Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the

Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this;—have we not power to eat and to drink? have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have we not power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" . . . .

. . . . . .

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have

I written these things that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void."

But though protesting against an abandonment of his right, and protesting also against being supposed wanting in love towards the Corinthians, he persisted that nothing should deprive him of this boast, that in the regions of Achaia he had preached the gospel gratuitously. He "robbed" he tells them "other churches, taking wages of them"—i. e. receiving more than a proportionate contribution, from the churches of Macedonia, rather than be a burden to the Corinthians.

It was only it seems, the most docile, humble, single-minded and unsuspicious of his converts, and those most exempt from the machinations of "evil workers," seeking to raise parties among them, that he would so far *trust*, as to *admit* them as contributors to his support.

And one could easily understand even from conjecture, had we no experience of modern times to instruct us, how judicious was the course the apostle followed. One might anticipate even from a knowledge of human nature,

the danger to which a minister must be exposed who is supported by the voluntary contributions of the very people among whom he is officiating:—the danger that (as Paley has expressed it in his homely language,) preaching should be regarded as a mode of begging;—the danger that some of his congregation should think themselves authorized to dictate to him what he should teach, and how; that the most bountiful contributors should think their opinion entitled to more weight,—their concerns to more attention,—than those of the poorer or more sparing of the members;—the danger that his zealous exertions and his conciliating kindness, even when springing from the purest source, should be ascribed to interested motives; and that even when perfectly free from all bias—all desire to flatter his audience and accommodate his doctrines to their inclination, he should yet be unable to gain full credit for such uncompromising sincerity.

And it is evident that all evils of this class are likely to arise in at least as great a degree in these days, as in those of the apostles and other *inspired* teachers.

As for the supposed counter-balancing advantage, the incitements to exertion and vigilance, and to carefulness in respect of conduct, when a minister is dependent for his maintenance on the voluntary payments of his congregation, it is my decided and deliberate conviction, that when such dependence does operate at all, it operates much more for evil than for good. I do not believe there is a single active and useful minister in existence, supported on what is called "the voluntary system," who would not have been at least as useful if supported by an endowment, or from a common fund. And whenever a minister is found, who, enjoying this latter kind of support, is inactive or negligent, he must, I am convinced, be of such a character, that inactive and negligent must be the *best* thing *he* would ever be. In the profession of the law indeed,—in medicine—in short, in almost all secular professions,—the stimulus afforded by the hope of secular advantage, operates, on the whole, beneficially to the public, in respect of the objects of those professions. In the ministerial office (as I had occasion to observe in a lecture delivered

not long ago in this City *,) from the very different character of the objects proposed, the reverse is what on the whole may be expected.

The occasion does not require me, nor would its limits permit me, to discuss fully the question between the two modes of supporting Christian ministers; by the voluntary payments to each from the members of his own particular congregation, or, on the other hand, by a stipend from some fund independent of the congregation, and arising either from an endowment, or from a common stock supplied by general contributions. But it is worth remarking by the way, that it is not very uncommon to find the advocates for the first of these modes, supporting their own views by a most extraordinary misapplication of language: they speak sometimes of their objection to a "hired ministry;" applying that term to such as are maintained by endowments, as distinguished from such as are paid by their respective congregations. Now certainly these last ought not indeed to be exposed to any reproach on

* Since published, by the Dublin "Law-Institute," and afterwards in the "Elements of Rhetoric."

account of a mode of support expressly sanctioned by our Lord; (and which, it should be observed, He has expressly designated by the term *hire*,) but they ought to remember that the reproach, if there were any, would apply to themselves, and to themselves only; and that those whom they stigmatize as *hired* ministers, are precisely the only ones who are *not* hired.

From the peculiar dangers attendant on the payment of each minister by his own congregation, we may be in a great degree exempt, either by endowments, or by voluntary contributions thrown together into a common stock, and distributed "to all (iii. Acts,) as every one has need."

I know not whether it would be *desirable* that the endowments of a Church should be completely sufficient for the support of all its ministers, without any call on the liberality of its members. Certain it is, that to cultivate a habit of liberality—"to be ready to give and glad to distribute," is a considerable portion of the moral discipline appointed for Christians in this present life. If all men could be so pro-

vided for that there should be no occasion for any such thing as *giving*,—if, for instance, it were possible to realize the Utopian schemes with which of late years the public have been amused, of communities without private property — one great branch of Christian virtue would remain dormant. We know that such puerile dreams never can be realized; that "the poor will never cease out of the land:" and we are bound joyfully to embrace the opportunity of exercising that Christian virtue which the arrangements of Providence call for. But besides the moral advantage, (I mean the advantage to the *giver*,) derived from the exercise of beneficence to the *distressed poor*, there is an additional, and perhaps a still greater, moral advantage in liberality towards any *religious* object. Our heart is apt to go along with our treasure. The persons—the institutions—the objects—on which our bounty has been bestowed, become endeared to us; and as a kindly feeling is generated and kept up toward the distressed poor whom our liberality has relieved, so, an increased attachment to the Church, and an increased value for gospel-truth,

and zeal for its diffusion, are likely to be produced by the habit of coming forward to aid the Church-revenues — by "contribution towards the gospel." Even comparatively insignificant objects become interesting to any one who has but been brought to *do* something, and to *give* something, towards them: and surely there is no object in respect of which it is so desirable to cultivate such feelings.

But be this as it may; whether it be on the whole a good or an evil that there should be such endowments for the maintenance of the clergy, and other church-purposes, as to leave no need for the exercise of private liberality, is a question we need not enter upon; because, whether desirable or not, we well know that such is not the actual state of things. We know that there are many places in this Country much needing the labours of Christian ministers, in some of which there are very scanty funds, in others none at all, for their support. And even if the total of all the church-endowments in the Country were sufficient (which is far enough from being the fact,) for the suitable support of the total number of ministers required, still

our object could not be accomplished, unless these were (which we know to be practically impossible,) thrown together into a common stock and re-distributed.

Some persons are accustomed to talk of the wealth of the church—the endowments of the church—forgetting that the church as a Body has hardly any property at all; and none that is available for the support of clergymen. The endowments are those of each *parish*, separately; and supposing the *average* of these to be far beyond what it is, the call for private liberality to supply deficiencies where they exist, would not necessarily be even diminished. If any one were to deny the claim of the distressed poor to charitable assistance, on the ground that they were individual members of a wealthy *nation*, and that the total funds of the whole nation were sufficient for the comfortable maintenance of the total population, he would be advancing nothing more unreasonable than if he were to apply the same kind of calculation in the present case.

But if by our church, be meant, *all the members* of it, both clergy and people, and if by the

property of the church, any one means all that is possessed by all its members, then I do believe, that the revenues of the church are amply sufficient for the support of a sufficient number of ministers. All that is requisite is, liberality and Christian zeal in those who have the means, and in all, proportionably to their means, so as to give full efficiency to a Society such as ours—to keep copiously filled those channels which it provides.

It cannot but be gratifying to every well-wisher to our church, that such a Society has been called into existence, to supply a great and important deficiency; a deficiency long since acknowledged and notorious in many places, and in some, continually increasing; and a deficiency (I must add,) likely to cause a scandal and bring disgrace on the church as a community. For besides the direct evils resulting from the want of a suitable provision for a Christian minister where needed, there are other indirect evils also. If an impression is produced on the mind of any one, that those professed members of our church, who can afford money for other purposes, while they

suffer such a deficiency to remain unremedied, as far as relates to any contribution on their part,—if the impression, I say, is produced, that these persons do not really believe the religion they profess, or do not regard it as a matter of any importance that the people should partake of its ordinances, and receive instruction in it; and that it is only from political feelings that they are attached to the Established Church; or, perhaps, that they prefer it to any other religious communion, precisely because it has endowments, and that therefore they may continue members of it without being absolutely required to make any such pecuniary contributions as they would be unable to escape if they were professed members of some dissenting Body;—if, I say, in any case, impressions of this kind are created, and a grievous scandal to our religion is thus produced, this is a very important incidental and indirect evil, superadded to the immediate evil of an insufficient supply of ministers.

I have adverted to these considerations, because much as we may rejoice that the Society has received the degree of support it has, we

can by no means feel satisfied, unless it be much more extensively and amply supported; —unless in short, it be made fully adequate to supply the wants for which it was designed.

For certainly the professed members of our church not only are well *able* to do this, if they have but the requisite good will, but even if they had amply provided for the proposed object, they would still be much less heavily burdened than other bodies of Christians, who are found cheerfully coming forward to bear *all* the expences of maintaining their own clergy.

I hope indeed that most of those who hear me, have been actuated by higher and purer motives than the dread of a reproach to our Church, or a jealousy of being outdone either by Christians of other denominations or by persons pursuing some political object. I trust you are influenced by feelings which would operate equally, if there were no religious community in the world but our own;—by love towards our Divine Master, and for his sake, towards our brethren. But if there be any one who is not roused to exertion either by this

feeling, or yet again, by this in conjunction with that of emulation, and with a dread of bringing a scandal on our Church, his apathy is surely a doubly aggravated fault.

Let us not then relax our endeavours to make known and to recommend, as extensively as possible, the object of this Society, and to exhort all who *profess* a veneration and love for our Church, not to satisfy themselves with mere professions;—not to "love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth:" and let us unite our prayers for the divine blessing on our efforts; "being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work" in the members of our Church, "will perform the same even unto the day of the Lord Jesus Christ."

NOTE A. TO PAGE 432.

I have already stated in a note to a former Sermon the grounds of my conviction that Christians never were, as such, required or exhorted to divest themselves of private property.

As the view which I have taken of the subject was suggested by Dr. Hinds's History, I have thought it best to cite in this place, a part of his argument, in his own words.

"Nothing is more certain than that the ministers of the word, including the Apostles, were maintained out of the public purse. If some, like St. Paul, relieved it by daily labour, his own words prove that they were not required to do so. And why were they thus maintained? Because, no doubt, *they* had, in strict conformity with our Lord's words, 'forsaken lands, houses, and all their goods,' for his sake,—for his service. 'Sell all that thou hast, and follow me,' may perhaps aptly describe the first qualification of one who was to have, for the most part, no certain abode, and whose time and attention were necessarily to be withdrawn from the pursuits of gain. From the character, then, in which the original preachers of Christianity present themselves to our notice, from the promise of our Lord to those 'who should forsake lands, houses, &c. for his sake and the Gospel's,' and from the fact that they all did receive support from the public fund—from these circumstances taken together, does it not seem likely, that a resignation of all individual and separate property into the Apostles' hands was the first step taken by those who devoted themselves to the ministry?—the pledge that they, having now forsaken all, were ready to follow the standard of the Cross? On this pledge perhaps, then, they were put into office by the Apostles; their other qualifications having been at the same time ascertained by the power of discerning spirits.

"One remark there is, certainly, in St. Luke's account which may be considered by some to stand in the way of this suggestion. He states, that on the second manifestation of the Holy Ghost, '*all* who had lands and houses, sold them, and brought in the amount.' But when we remember the prophetic exclamation of the Psalmist, 'The Lord spake, and great was the company of the preachers,' and consider how many were required now for the dispersion of the faith, this, in a *society of poor men*, cannot imply a very disproportionate number. Add to this, that the statement of their bringing in their money to the Apostles, by no means implies that it was in all instances accepted. In the general excitement, produced by two, rapidly successive, manifestations of the Holy Ghost and its gifts, all may have rushed eagerly to claim employment in a service so evidently Divine, and so gloriously sanctioned by God. All who had property would naturally have thrown it up, as a pledge that they were ready to be employed, leaving the Apostles, and the Holy Spirit who guided them, to decide whether the offer of themselves would be accepted."—Hinds's *History of the Rise of Christianity*, pp. 140, 141, (2nd Edition).

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SERMON XVII.

THE CHRISTIAN DUTY OF EDUCATING THE POOR*.

MATTHEW XXV. 40.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

THIS passage is one out of the very many earnest exhortations to beneficence which occur in the discourses of our Lord and of his Apostles. After alluding to the most common temporal wants and afflictions to which man is liable—hunger and nakedness, sickness and imprisonment—He represents himself as declaring at the day of judgment that He considers the poor and the distressed as his brethren, and that He regards the kind offices done to them in

* Preached in St. Patrick's Cathedral, 24th November, 1844, in behalf of the National School of Clondalkin, and published, with the Author's permission, by the Patrons of the School.

need as done to Himself, and Himself as neglected by those who neglect the relief of their fellow-creatures. And in other places He contrasts the sort of beneficence taught by Himself, with the narrow and partial sort of kindness inculcated by other teachers, whose maxim was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy;" and who restricted their good offices to those from whom they hoped for a return, or to their personal friends, or men of their own nation, or sect, or party; while He, on the contrary, tells his disciples to "love their enemies," to "do good, hoping for nothing again," and to be "kind to the unthankful and the evil:" and when asked what He means by a "*neighbour*," selects, as an example, an *alien* and a *heretic*—one of that abhorred nation, the Samaritans, whom we find surprised at his even asking one of them for a draught of water: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?"

And the Apostles, as might be expected, we find imitating their Blessed Master in their earnest inculcations of the duties of beneficence.

All this is what we should naturally look for in the teachers of a pure and exalted morality. But there is this remarkable circumstance connected with such teaching, when coming from one possessed of unlimited miraculous powers, that He evidently shows his principal design to be the moral discipline and improvement of character of the *givers*—the persons who were to *exercise* that beneficence which He teaches. On two extraordinary occasions, and only on those, He miraculously multiplied food, so as to feed great multitudes with a few loaves; and on each of those occasions He directs "the fragments to be gathered up" and saved, as if on purpose to show that He did not design the habitual *repetition* of such a miracle, either for the ordinary support of his own disciples, or for the relief of the poor. And it is evident from the Gospel-narrative, that He was in the habit of directing that the poor should usually be relieved out of that common stock from which He and his immediate followers were maintained.

After his departure, again, He left his Apostles unprovided with any miraculous supplies

for their ordinary wants, and dependent on the contributions of their brother-Christians. These, it seems, were to be thus exercised in the practice of that liberality which was designed to form an essential part of the Christian character, and were thus to obtain a greater benefit than the recipients of their liberality; according to his own saying, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." And to this design of our Lord's, we find the Apostle Paul alluding, when he is acknowledging the liberality to himself of his converts the Philippians. "It is not," says he, "that I desire the gift, but I desire the fruit that may abound on *your* account*."

Our Lord's proceeding, in this respect, we may perceive to be in exact accordance with that general law of Divine Providence, which makes man universally dependent for almost every kind of advantage on his fellow-men. The human race would perish, but for the care bestowed in infancy and childhood for a far

* "*The* gift," not, as in our version, "*a* gift," is the exact rendering of the original.

longer portion of time than is requisite for any other animal. And all the arts of life, which to man much more than supply the place of those instincts with which the lower animals are far more liberally endowed, are not left to be devised by each individual for himself, but are communicated from man to man. In all things that concern this present world, we are continually indebted, for almost everything we possess and enjoy, to each other's services.

And this rule of Divine Providence is far from being confined to the case of man's bodily and temporal wants, but extends also to the cultivation of the understanding, and to the formation of the mind and religious character. As men are dependent on each other's services for the maintenance, and care, and support which are requisite for their animal life, so are they also instructed and trained by each other in every art and science, and in the knowledge of their duties to God and to their neighbours.

Without presuming to explain why God has thought fit that in so many even of the most important points the welfare of our fellow-

creatures has been thus intrusted to us, and left to depend in great measure on our care, this at least we can clearly see, that we are thus called on by a sense of most awful responsibility to "love, not in word, but in deed"—to bring our benevolent principles into practice, and to *cultivate* and cherish kindly feelings by that habitual and active *exercise* without which they would soon languish and fade away.

As for the modes in which a benevolent character may manifest itself—the different ways of showing kindness and doing good, to our neighbour, we cannot doubt that our Lord meant to include *all* of them, and not to restrict what He said to the particular cases He alludes to, of hunger, nakedness, imprisonment, and sickness. And, to different persons, different kinds of opportunities are offered, of benefiting a fellow-creature. Some opportunity almost every one may find, if he seek for it in earnest. And to many, there are several different channels open, through which their beneficence may flow, if the stream itself of that beneficence be not wanting.

To me it has always appeared, that to aid

in giving useful *education* to the poor is one of the best channels into which our beneficence can be directed; because, both a *greater amount* of good, and also a more *permanent* good, is thus effected, than could be effected in most other ways at the same cost. Without depreciating the duty of relieving the bodily wants of our poorer brethren, it does seem to me one of the most important of our duties, to feed the hungry and thirsty *mind*—to relieve those whose sickness consists of intellectual and moral disease or infirmity — to clothe those whose nakedness is mental, with whatever sound principles and useful knowledge we can supply to them, and to release them from the bondage of gross ignorance and barbarism, giving free play to the faculties with which man is endowed by his Maker. This is a kind of good, we should remember, which can be accomplished to a greater extent than many others which we are bound to aim at. The distresses of penury and sickness we can relieve in this or that *particular instance*, and we are bound to do so according to our opportunities; but these are evils which can never, with all our efforts,

be completely *abolished* in this world. But gross barbarian and brutish ignorance *may*, if all men would but exert themselves as they ought. A whole nation in which indigence and sickness should be unknown, is what evidently could never exist, though benevolent and judicious exertions would greatly mitigate those evils; but the savage ignorance of the totally uneducated is an evil which might be *wholly* eradicated; and it is a disgrace to a civilized and Christian nation that *any* of our countrymen should be left in such a state.

Moreover, in what relates to the relief of the bodily wants of the indigent, we always reckon *that* as the most judicious and effectual kind of help, which puts a man in the way of helping *himself*. If we feed a poor family for a week or a month, and then leave them as we found them, we do but little good: whereas if we can place them in a situation to maintain themselves, the benefit is lasting. Now it is well known, that, as a general rule, the accompaniments of gross ignorance are, idleness, careless improvidence, and intemperance; and that the fruits of good education—so far as it is

good—are in the same degree, generally, a habit of prudent forethought, steady industry, frugality, and temperance. In supplying education, therefore, to the poor, we put them in the way of permanently helping themselves, even in respect of their other wants, and of avoiding or mitigating many of the evils to which their condition is liable.

Again, the benefit of education extends very far beyond the immediate objects of it. A person left in a state of moral and intellectual darkness—in the condition of a mere animal—is not only himself a miserably degraded being, but is dangerous and noxious to those around him. And any one (in whatever station of life) who is, to any degree, well-educated, is, so far as he is well-educated, a blessing not only to himself, but to his neighbours, and the whole community. He will be, so far, a better neighbour, friend, servant, master, son, father, subject, — than an illiterate barbarian.

I know, however, that there are some who disbelieve or doubt this last advantage, and who apprehend danger from the diffusion of knowledge among the labouring classes, lest

they should make an ill use of what they have learned, and lest they should become puffed up with conceit at their own acquirements, and should feel themselves above the humble toil by which they are to subsist.

Now, that an ill use may be made of this, or of any other kind of advantage, is undeniable. If you give money to the indigent, they may squander it in intemperance, or may become idle and improvident through reliance on your bounty. And restored health and prolonged life may be so employed as to become a curse instead of a blessing, both to the object of your kindness and to others. But shall we then abstain altogether from doing good to our brethren because it is possible for them perversely to turn good into evil?

But in respect of the particular danger now in question,—that of a man's becoming proud of his knowledge, and disdaining an humble station and a laborious occupation,—so far from this danger being increased by the widest possible diffusion of education, this, on the contrary, is one of the best safeguards against it. The evil is much the more likely to occur among a people where gross ignorance is the

rule, and education the exception. The humblest rudiments of learning, where the attainment of them is very *rare*, and elevates a man above his fellows, may generate pride and fretful discontent. But no one is likely to pride himself on that which is no *distinction*. No one would be likely to disdain the condition of a labourer, from having only as much knowledge as his fellow-labourers. Nor, again, would any one, however uneducated, be *industrious, through ignorance*, if he could subsist in comfort without labour. What urges a man to labour, is, not want of education, but the necessity of earning his bread, or the desire of bettering his condition. And it would be absurd to suppose that the mass of the population would, if educated, prefer starving, or subsisting by beggary, or by fraud and plunder, to honest industry. On the contrary, as a general rule, it has always been found that the most idle and profligate of both sexes,—the greatest proportion of beggars and of criminals,—are to be found among the most illiterate and untaught.

Again, it is not in the best educated, but on the contrary, in the most ignorant com-

munities, that men of some degree of knowledge and acquirements and of depraved dispositions, are the most likely to obtain a mischievous influence. Such a man is extremely likely to be a *leader* of popular commotions, and of resistance to the laws; but he is not likely to be one of those *led*. The instruments with which such a man works, are the ignorant and unthinking—and therefore easily deluded—populace. The better any one is educated, the more likely he is to understand, not only his duties, but his true interests; and, therefore, the less is he fitted to be a tool of those who would make use of him for their own private interest and ambition.

If, indeed, the labouring population consisted of *slaves*,—governed like domestic animals, not for the general good, but for the benefit of their masters, it might be expedient to enact the law which does actually exist in some slave-states, prohibiting their receiving any education. For those who would keep their fellow-creatures in the condition of brutes, act consistently in degrading them as much as possible into the character of brutes. But a

government, properly so called—*i.e.* whose object is the welfare of the whole community—will always be best obeyed by those who are best qualified to understand the necessity, and the advantages, of government, and the absurdity as well as wickedness of attempting to improve their condition by lawless outrages.

Then, again, another evil which some apprehend from the diffusion of education,—the propagation, by means of noxious publications, of irreligious and seditious principles—of profligacy, blasphemy, and impurity;—this also is a danger which, so far from being increased by making education general, can be combated in no other way. For some there will always be found, able and willing to be the apostles of infidelity and sedition; as some of you are perhaps aware is the case, not only in several parts of England, but in this very city; and the *ears*, at least, of an illiterate multitude cannot be stopped against such teachers: nor can the poison thus spread through that illiterate multitude be counteracted by the antidote of *useful publications;* which it is vain to circulate among those unable to read.

And what sort of persons will be most easily infected by such poisons—the enlightened, or the ignorant?—those who are able to read the arguments on both sides for themselves, or those who are left to hear—and probably to hear uncontradicted — whatever is spoken or read to them by their associates?—those who have been accustomed early to the exercise of their faculties, or those whose minds have been left wholly untrained? Is it, in short, in the light, or in the darkness, that falsehood is the more easily passed off for truth? Vain must be every attempt to secure men by ignorance against meeting with temptations; and never can ignorance enable any one to resist them. It is far the wiser course, to fortify them early, by the best instruction we can supply, against the trials and dangers which they cannot avoid; so that unharmed they may "take up the serpents" they will meet in their path, and that "if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them."

There is another point also in which the mischiefs that may arise from perverted knowledge—the evil influence of those who make

a bad use of what they have learned, or whose moral qualities generally do not keep pace with their intellectual attainments—may be counteracted, and can only be counteracted, by the general diffusion of education. There are many humble, yet far from unimportant situations (which I need not instance, as they will readily occur to you) which cannot *possibly* be filled but by such as have a considerable share of education. If, therefore, there be but few of the lower orders who possess this, our choice being thus limited to a very small number, we are often compelled by the necessity of the case, to place in situations of great responsibility men of doubtful integrity, or of profligate habits, because no others can be found competent. Of this almost every one's experience may furnish examples: and thus bad men are empowered to do mischief,—vice is kept in countenance, and moral worth discouraged. Whereas, if education becomes very *general*, a wide choice will be allowed us; and out of the multitude who will be qualified in point of attainments to fill such situations, those of the most unexceptionable and deserving character

will, of course, be selected—to the great improvement of the public morals, as well as the advantage of their employers.

I cannot doubt, therefore, that both to the Country we belong to, and to our poorer brethren themselves, and to our heavenly Master, who regards even the least of them as his own brethren, we are strongly bound, to promote, when we have opportunity, the education of the children of those who cannot, unassisted, defray the expense, and to endeavour to impart to all, and to each of them, the best instruction that circumstances will allow.

With regard to the particular school for which I am soliciting your aid, I can safely say*, not only from careful inquiry, but in

* It may be needful to advert in this place to a report which has been circulated, (not more groundless, by the way, than several others on the same subject,) that the Provost and myself give little or no attention to the business of the Education-Board, and that consequently the Established Church is not duly represented there.

Were such a rumour confined to Dublin and the vicinity, it would not be worth notice, because it is perfectly well known to all who think it worth while to inquire—and indeed to many who do not—how emphatically it is the *reverse* of the fact. No one, in this city, need be ignorant how very rarely

some degree from my own personal knowledge, that it is highly deserving of support. It is open to, and actually contains children of different religious persuasions, who receive, each, the best instruction that the parents of each permit. Those of our own communion are, as I can testify from my own knowledge, assiduously catechized, and instructed in the religious principles of our Church; and all, of whatever denomination, are taught—in addition to the secular instruction they receive—the most important portions of Sacred History *. But no religious instruction is forced on any child against the will of its parents †. And it is in this way, surely, that the greatest amount of good is effected that it is in our power to effect.

To use arguments to prove this, is the less necessary, because such a system as I have just

it happens that either the Provost or myself are absent from any meeting of the Board; or how much and laboriously I am occupied at other times also, in business connected with it. But the circulation of the misstatement in other parts of Ireland, and in England, seems to call for this contradiction of it.

* See Note A, page 473. † See Note B, page 474.

alluded to has stood the test of very long experience, and has been sanctioned by very general approbation, at our *University;* which, as you are, doubtless, well aware, admits students of various religious persuasions,—affords secular instruction to all,—and provides religious instruction also to those willing to receive it; but does not force its religious instruction on any who have a conscientious (however unreasonable) scruple against receiving it *. Those, therefore, who approve of the system pursued at Trinity College, and yet profess a conscientious objection to a school for the poor, conducted on the principles I have described, must be supposed—*unless, indeed, they would establish one rule for the rich and another for the poor*—to be proceeding on some misapprehension of the facts of the case, and to have taken up some mistaken notion as to the system actually pursued in such a school.

The governors, and patrons, and advocates of a University or a school, conducted on these principles, cannot, we may presume, but be

* See Note C, page 477

convinced that such a course is calculated to effect, as I have said, the greatest amount of good that it is in our power to effect under the existing circumstances of this Country. For, any other course that could be adopted would manifestly tend to diminish the benefit conferred. If a school (and precisely the same reasoning will apply to the University also) were restricted to members of our own Church, this would cut off a very large portion of our fellow-citizens from the benefit of an education —less perfect, indeed, in our judgment, than we could wish, but incomparably preferable to none at all, or to any other that they would be likely to receive. And as for compelling all persons, of whatever persuasion, to receive instruction in the principles of our own Church, there are three decisive reasons—any one of them alone sufficient—against cherishing such a notion: we have neither the *right*, nor the *power;* and if we had both the right and the power, our labours on such a system would be *worse than useless.*

First, we have no *right* to do violence to any one's conscience, however mistaken his

persuasion may be. Our Great Master has expressly forbidden the employment of force in his cause; and has left his followers to advance the truth of his Gospel by the meekness of persuasion, and by the influence of good example.

And the *power*, as well as the right, is wanting, of resorting to secular coercion; for though a college or a school might compel all the *pupils* to receive instruction in their own doctrines, the law, as it now exists, will not allow us to compel any one to *become* a pupil; and the attempt to do violence to their religious scruples would induce the far greater part of them to withdraw.

And lastly, even if we had the right and the power to force religious instruction on all, such instruction so given would be even worse than *useless*. For religious precepts, we should remember, are not like some potent drug, which, whether swallowed willingly or unwillingly, will operate equally on the bodily system. One may be indeed compelled to make certain religious *professions*, or to commit to memory certain *words*; but religion itself, every one would acknowledge, must be in its own nature

voluntary. It is "with the heart," says the Apostle, that "man believeth unto righteousness;" and every thing pertaining to religion that is received not with sincere conviction and hearty good will, but with inward disbelief, and contempt or disgust, is not only unprofitable, but tends to alienate the mind from whatever is so learned*.

For these reasons, the governors of any college, or the patrons of any school, conducted on the principles I have been recommending, are justified in deciding that by this course they effect by far the greatest amount of good that is within their power.

And with respect to the peculiar locality of the school to which I am now inviting your support, I believe there is no doubt that you can ascertain, from the testimony of many persons—from several probably of those who now hear me—that the contrast is most striking, and beyond what any one could have hoped, between the present condition of that village, and what it was, previously to the establishment of

* See Note D, page 478.

the school, and of other charitable institutions introduced at the same time. It certainly does present a strong contrast (far as it still is from being every thing that we could desire) to several of those degraded, wretched, and barbarian districts which are still to be found, to the disgrace of this country, within a short distance; with the very worst of which it was, I understand, formerly on a level.

Many of the advantages we ourselves enjoy, we are apt, through long familiarity, not to prize as highly as we ought, and with due gratitude to the Providence which bestows them on us. Look at the condition, for instance, of the wandering savages of Australia, or of several parts of America. If you contemplate them, not as pictured in the day-dreams of poets, living a life of pure and happy simplicity, but in the descriptions of those who have *visited* them, you will see people scarcely human in any thing but the form; brutish, and even more odious than the brutes, because *degraded*; ferocious, mischievous, treacherous; living in perpetual insecurity—in constant distress for want of the necessaries of life, and

knowing no gratification but disgusting sensuality, and the plunder and slaughter of their fellow-creatures. Such is Savage man.

Now, what makes the difference between any one of us, my Christian friends, and these debased and wretched beings? Evidently it is *education*. Each one of you would, if by some accident you had been left alone in infancy on the coast of New Holland, and reared among those savage tribes, have grown up to manhood such as one of them. And yet the humblest individual in this congregation, who does but know how to read, has a far greater superiority to those savages than the most eminently learned men in the whole world have to him. Are you then duly sensible of the bounty of that Providence who has thus favoured you? If so, you cannot but rejoice in the opportunity of doing something, according to your means, towards imparting a like benefit to your poorer brethren.

A truly grateful heart longs for some occasion of testifying gratitude, and of making, if possible, some *return* to his benefactor. But what return can we make to God? What *need*

can He have of our gifts and our services? In what way can we testify our thankfulness for all we have, and all we hope for, from Him? He himself, my Christian friends, has answered that inquiry, when speaking in his Son Jesus Christ. Our Blessed Lord has graciously declared that, "unprofitable servants" as we are, we yet *can* make to Him what He is pleased to reckon as a return. He has declared that He will regard himself as *represented* by the humblest of our poor brethren, whom He condescends to reckon as his own. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Verily I say unto you, Forasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

NOTE A. TO PAGE 465.

The notion that the Scriptures are *excluded* from the schools in connexion with the National Board, and that the children brought up in them, have no means of acquiring any knowledge of what pertains to the Christian religion, has prevailed to a degree which is really wonderful, considering that it never had any foundation in fact, and that correct information on the subject is so easily accessible. For instance, the Rev. Mr. Hefferman of Newport, county Tipperary, states, in a pamphlet lately published, (p. 49–50.) that he, in common, as he believes, with many of his brethren, had till very lately, an entirely erroneous impression as to this point. And yet, he also says (p. 105–106.) "to this post (the living of Newport) I was appointed by the late Bishop of Cashel, a sincere advocate of the National system, after a correspondence—and I record it with double pleasure, as a grateful tribute to his amiable condescension and liberality,—in which he stated his views of the National system, I mine. My last letter contained a distinct and unequivocal declaration, that I could not co-operate with the National Board. . . . . His next letter contained not the slightest allusion to our previous correspondence, but a most kind and unqualified offer of the preferment I now hold."

Yet all the time, Mr. Hefferman's undiminished disapprobation of the system was entirely or chiefly based, it seems, on the above-mentioned misapprehension: one which the Bishop might so easily have removed!

Those who mean by "exclusion of the Scriptures," the "exclusion of *compulsion*," have, certainly, a right to state their objections to the system of non-compulsion; but they

are surely bound in fairness to express, in plain terms, what it is that they do mean, instead of using an expression likely to be understood in a sense at variance with the truth. (See the Reports of the Commissioners; especially the Ninth.)

It may be worth while to mention also in this place, that some confusion of thought seems to have arisen from a careless employment, or from an indistinct apprehension, of such current phrases as "the pure word of God"—"the very inspired Scriptures themselves"—"the entire Bible"—"the genuine records of inspiration unmixed with any thing human," &c. Some persons seem to have thus been led practically to forget that there is no *inspired book* in the *English* language; and that the Scriptures properly so called, —*i. e.* the Hebrew and Greek originals—are not read in *any* school for the poor. Nor is there, I apprehend, any school in which any translation of the whole Bible is read *all through*. The utmost that the children ever read, is, *portions* of some *translations* of Scripture; whether those portions are selected at the option of the master, or in whatever other way.

Some members, however, of our Church, are accustomed to speak of the "authorized version," as if they understood that version to be the "SCRIPTURE" which is referred to in the Articles as the standard and rule of faith; forgetting that *no version* is ever referred to as inspired, and that the Articles were drawn up *before* the "authorized version" was composed.

NOTE B. TO PAGE 465.

Some persons have denied the *right* of parents to debar their children from the Scriptures, or to train them in a false religion; by which, if they mean that the parents are *not right* in thus acting, or in adhering themselves to a false religion, I fully agree with them. But this is not the question. The

question is, whether *we* have any right to interfere in religious concerns between parent and child, or to compel any one to profess a religion which he does not believe, and to take part in any religious exercises which his conscience disapproves. A man is not *right* who hoards up all his money, or squanders it in extravagant follies: but if *we* were thereupon to claim the right to dictate to him how he should dispose of his money, we should evidently be seeking to encroach on the rights of property, and to make that property no longer *his*, but ours. Some, however, have even gone so far as to introduce the supposed case (as if parallel to the foregoing), of a parent's instigating a child to commit theft or murder; which clearly he would have no rightful power to do. I have even seen, in a public document, inserted in newspapers, the recognition of a parent's right in respect of his child's religious education stigmatized as "the sanction of *unlawful*, because unscriptural, restraint on the part of the parent."

We ought to consider, however, how far the advocates of such a principle would be led by it, if they should be intrusted with power fully to follow it out. Having declared that a parent's control over the religious education of his children is "unlawful,"—*i.e.* that it *ought* to be *made* unlawful,—they must of course proceed to advocate a law for *compelling* every parent to *send* his children to their schools. For it is manifest that to leave a man at liberty to train up his children in his own religion at *home*, or in some *other* school, would not effect their object, and would be giving a "sanction to that restraint on the parent's part" which they deprecate, and which they place on a par with inciting his children to steal, or to commit murder.

But the distinction between the two cases (which is fully recognized by the law of the land) is very obvious to any man of common sense, who does but resort to the simple rule of doing as he would be done by. He had only to consider what

he would think, (supposing he lived under a Mahometan governor, or of such as professed a different form of Christianity from his own,) of a law compelling him to have his children brought up Mahometans, &c. It would be in vain for him to allege "My religion is true, and Mahometism false." The governor might reply, "*I* think the reverse; and it is *I* that must decide, supposing that *all* things pertaining to human good came within the rightful province of the civil magistrate." No answer could be given, except by maintaining (that which is the right principle) the restriction of the proper department of the secular magistrate to *secular* concerns—to the protection of men's life and property.

This principle, which by some is alluded to as "Warburton's theory," as if it had originated with *him*, was evidently that of Christ and his apostles, and must have been perfectly familiar to the minds of the early Christians for several centuries. For the sacred writers continually exhort their converts, without any express limitation or restriction, to "submit to *every ordinance of man* for the Lord's sake;" teaching that "the powers that be are ordained of God for the *punishment of evil-doers*, and for the praise of them that do well:" and that "rulers are not *a terror to good works, but to evil*." Yet we know that these rulers were then, and long after, persecuting heathen idolaters; and we are sure that the apostles were not understood, nor could have meant to be understood, as including under "evil-doers" the transgressors of the *laws relating to religion*, and inculcating obedience to the rulers in *those* points. The early Christians, therefore, could not but have understood that the *proper province of civil government* was confined to *secular* matters. Nor could they, with any good reason at least, have supposed that a Christian emperor had, as such, any more extended rightful control. The Christian emperors, indeed, were often as fierce persecutors as the Pagans had been, of those of their Christian subjects—Atha-

nasians or Arians, as the case might be—who differed in creed from themselves. But it would have been absurd to suppose that the apostles meant that a man should indeed *dis*obey the command of the magistrates to renounce *Christianity* for *Paganism*, but should *obey* them if commanded to renounce what he believed to be *pure and genuine* Christianity for what he considered as an heretical *corruption* of it. The apostolical principle, therefore, of placing under the direct and proper control of the civil magistrate secular concerns, and *those only*, must, in all fair interpretation, be considered as of universal application.—See Essay I. on the Kingdom of Christ, Appendix A.

NOTE C. TO PAGE 466.

I would not be understood to deny the sincerity of those who oppose the system of the National Schools: *i. e.* their sincerely wishing for a different system. But the real ground of their opposition must be something different from that which many of them put forth; viz.: a conscientious *scruple against affording any secular instruction* to any one who will not receive what they think the *best religious* instruction. For it would be judging them very unfavourably, and I hope incorrectly, to suppose that they really do feel such a scruple, and yet are willing to stifle it for the sake of emolument to themselves or their friends. Trinity College, Dublin, would lose many students, if Roman Catholics and Presbyterians were not permitted, as they are, to receive education there without any interference with their religion; to absent themselves from such religious teaching and exercises as they conscientiously disapprove; and to receive what they do approve, from ministers of their own persuasion. And the same may be said of many schools kept by Protestant clergymen, which

are open to Roman Catholic pupils on the same conditions. It can hardly be supposed that the tutors and schoolmasters who afford instruction on these terms, really believe such a procedure to be in itself a wicked and ungodly thing, which nevertheless they consent to be parties to, for the sake of private gain.

NOTE D. TO PAGE 469.

Mr. Heffernan justly remarks, in his pamphlet, (which is well worth reading,) how much every right-minded clergyman would be shocked at the profanation of permitting—much more, compelling—persons to partake of the Lord's Supper without any sincere wish to do so, or heartfelt devotion, or inward reverence for the ordinance. And we ought, as he observed, to have similar feelings respecting any similar profanation in regard to all religious exercises and studies. We should remember, as the late Dr. Arnold has observed, with the eloquent simplicity which characterizes his writings, that, "the highest truth, if professed by one who believes it not in his heart is, to him, a lie, and that he sins greatly by professing it. Let us try as much as we will, to convince our neighbours; but let us beware of influencing their conduct, when we fail in influencing their convictions. He who bribes or frightens his neighbour into doing an act which no good man would do for reward, or from fear, is tempting his neighbour to sin; he is assisting to lower and harden his conscience—to make him act for the favour and from the fear of man, instead of for the favour and from the fear of God: and if this be a sin in him, it is a double sin in us to tempt him to it.

SERMON XVIII.

THE SEARCH AFTER INFALLIBILITY,*

CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO THE DANGER OF RELIGIOUS ERRORS ARISING WITHIN THE CHURCH IN THE PRIMITIVE AS WELL AS IN ALL LATER AGES.

ACTS XX. 29, 30, 31.

I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

THIS parting admonition of the Apostle Paul to the Christian ministers of the Churches of

* Preached in the Cathedral of Christ Church, Dublin, on the occasion of the Ordination held on Sunday, the 22nd August, 1847, and published with the following dedication :—

Miletus and Ephesus, cannot be read by any careful student of Scripture without deep interest. But it will be found, on attentive reflection, to suggest even more matter for profitable meditation, and even more of instructive practical lessons, than might at first sight appear.

And to some of these I propose now to call your attention.

I. In the first place you will observe, that what the Apostle here says to the clergy whom he is addressing, is of a piece with much that we find in several of his Epistles. In his Epistles to the Corinthians, especially the Second, he warns them against "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ, and ministers of righteousness;" even as "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light:"—men seeking to disparage Paul's apostolic authority, and to introduce

"To the Candidates ordained at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, on Sunday, 22nd August, 1847, this Discourse, published at their request, is dedicated, with earnest wishes for their present and eternal welfare, and for the Divine Blessing on their ministerial labours, by their sincere friend and fellow-labourer, The Author."

doctrines opposed to his. "There must be," says he, "heresies among you, that they which are approved (δοκιμοι) may be made manifest among you." 1 Cor. xi. 19. The Epistle to the Galatians, again, is almost made up of similar cautions. The Philippians also are warned (chap. iii.), in like manner, to be on their guard against teachers who corrupted the Gospel. Cautions of the same kind are addressed to almost all the other Churches to which he wrote; and both Timothy and Titus are earnestly and repeatedly exhorted to watch against the inroads of these corruptions.

The Apostle Peter also cautions the disciples against those "unlearned and unstable" persons, who "wrest," he tells them, "the Scriptures to their own destruction."

The Apostle John, again, in his Epistles, is chiefly occupied in warning his hearers against those false prophets,—those "wolves, in sheep's clothing,"—of whom his Master had prophesied, and bid His disciples beware.

And here we find Paul, in his farewell address to the Elders, earnestly reiterating the solemn warning of this danger, which, he tells them,

he had been continually repeating for three years. "From among themselves," he tells them,—"from the very bosom of their own Church,"—men will arise teaching perverted doctrines *, "to draw away [the] disciples † after themselves."

Now it might seem wonderful, or even incredible, if we had not these records before us, that any such thing should have taken place; I mean, that in the very times of the Apostles themselves, whose authority from Heaven was attested by their miraculous powers, any false teachers should have not only arisen, but should have gained a hearing, and been able to draw away the disciples by pretending to an authority equal or superior to that of the genuine Apostle. And if we had not providentially possessed these records of the early dangers of the Church, we might have been disheartened or utterly thrown into despondency at the view of the various errors introduced in later times by men of high pretensions as religious teachers. We might have felt as if God had forsaken

* διεστραμμενα. † τους μαθητας.

His Church when He withdrew from it the guidance of the inspired Apostles, and left Christians to find their safety in vigilant and careful and candid examination of every doctrine taught. But, as it is, we see that, from the very first, this care and watchfulness were indispensably necessary to guard against the danger of false teachers introducing corruptions of the genuine Gospel. Strange and incredible as it may seem to us that any such men should have attempted, and should have succeeded in the attempt, to rival the Apostles, we are distinctly informed that so it was: and that Christians were then required to be on their guard against the grievous wolves in sheep's clothing, who would enter in, not sparing the flock.

We ought not, therefore, either to wonder, or to despond, at finding Christians in all subsequent ages exposed to the same dangers, and called on to exercise the same vigilance, as in the very times of the Apostles themselves.

II. And this leads me, in the second place, to the consideration of the way in which Paul tells his hearers to provide against the danger.

Does he promise them that the *primitive*

Church shall be safe from it?—that no inroads of error will take place for the first three or four centuries? On the contrary, he speaks of the danger as immediate.

Or does he tell them that they will find their safety in *apostolic succession*?—that it is miraculously provided that no teacher shall ever mislead them, who has but been regularly ordained by himself, or by those appointed by him to succeed him in the office of ordaining? On the contrary, he warns the Elders that even from the midst of their own Body,—of their own selves,—will arise men teaching a perverted Gospel to draw away the disciples after them.

Or again, does he tell them that when any point of doubt and difficulty arises, they are to find safety in making a reference to Peter, and to those who shall be divinely appointed from time to time as his successors and representatives, for infallible decisions and directions? Not a word is said of any Apostle but himself; or of any one who should succeed him in the apostolic office. To himself, during his life, they would naturally apply by letter, if

opportunity offered, for directions in any case of doubt that might arise. But not even any Apostle,—much less any successor of an Apostle,—is mentioned by Paul as the oracular guide, whom, after his own death, they were to consult.

Or, does he bid them resort to some central Church,—whether at Jerusalem, or at Rome, or at Byzantium,—and seek there for infallible guidance *?

Or does he direct them to summon a General Council, and refer every question that may arise to the decision of a majority of its votes; with a full assurance that these should be so supernaturally overruled by the Holy Spirit as to secure them from the possibility of error?

No: he makes no allusion whatever to any other Church or Prelate; to any successor of Peter or of the other Apostles; or to any infallible Council, as their guide. But he tells them to TAKE HEED TO THEMSELVES, and to the flock they are set over; he tells them to "*watch*;"

* See the Remarks on the "Pillar and Ground of the Truth," in Dr. Hinds' most valuable Tract on "Scripture and the Authorized Version." There is a strong preponderance of probability in favour of his view.

and he exhorts them to remember his own earnest warnings to them.

Now, if there *had* been provided by the Most High, any such safeguard as I have alluded to,—if Paul had known of any order of men, any Prelate, any particular Church, or General Council, designed by Providence as an infallible guide, and a sure remedy against errors and corruptions, would he not have been sure, on such an occasion as this, to give notice of it to his hearers? If, when he foresaw a perilous navigation for the vessel of the Church, he had known of a safe port, just at hand, and readily accessible, is it credible that he would have never alluded to it, but have left them exposed to the storms? Would he have been, in that case, "pure"—as he declares he was—"from the blood of all men?" Can any one seriously think, that against the dangers which he had been warning them of, and weeping over, for three years, he knew of a complete safeguard, and yet was so wanting in his duty,—so careless of their well-being,—as never to make the slightest mention of anything of the kind? To suppose this would be to suppose him destitute

not only of all faithfulness in his high office, but of common prudence and rationality.

And yet if any such provision really had been made by the Author of our faith, it is utterly inconceivable that the Apostle Paul should have been—and that too on such an occasion as this—left in utter ignorance of its existence. Whatever may be the precise meaning of our Lord's promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," it is at least perfectly clear what it could *not* mean: it could not relate to something either unknown to Paul, or kept back by him from his hearers. All that he knew, and that it was for their benefit to learn, he had, as he solemnly declares, taught to them; and this was no less, he assures them, than "the whole counsel and design of God." "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this,

that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears."

From all this we may learn, among other things, how great is the mistake of those who are satisfied to trace up some doctrine or practice not countenanced by Scripture, to a very early period; to what they call the Primitive Church; and consider this as establishing a divine sanction for what may have been, after all, one of the "perverse things" introduced by false teachers, and against which Paul so earnestly warned the Elders.

III. The third remark which I have to make on this passage is, that the exposure of Christians to these dangers, and the call upon them,—both ministers and laity,—for the continued exercise of vigilant caution,—this is far from appearing to us either *acceptable* or *probable*. It is not at all what man's *wishes* would have called for, or his *conjectures* anticipated, in a

Divine Revelation; but is alien̆e both from his feelings and his reasonings.

1. To examine and re-examine,—to reason and reflect,—to hesitate, and to decide with caution,—to be always open to evidence,—and to acknowledge that, after all, we are liable to error;—all this is, on many accounts, unacceptable to the human mind,—both to its diffidence and to its pride,—to its indolence,—its dread of anxious cares,—and to its love of self-satisfied and confident repose. And hence there is a strong prejudice in favour of any system which promises to put an end to the work of inquiry at once and for ever, and to relieve us from all embarrassing doubt and uncomfortable self-distrust. And this is done, either by setting forth the authority of an infallible Church, which is to prescribe, on every point, what we are to believe and to do; thus relieving us from all trouble and anxiety, and from all necessity of acting on the Apostle's warning to "take heed to ourselves;" or again, by putting in place of such a Church, *immediate inspiration* from heaven, whether bestowed on each individual who belongs to a certain sect or party,

or on some highly-gifted leader, who will communicate to his followers the messages he receives from Heaven. Widely different in many points as these sects, and parties, and churches are from each other, they all agree in the one fundamental point just noticed. They all address themselves to that powerful principle in human nature I have been adverting to, the *craving for infallibility* in religious matters.

I call it "a craving for infallibility" (although hardly any one is found in words claiming, or expecting to be, personally infallible), because it is evident that he who is infallibly following an infallible guide, is himself infallible. If his decisions on each point coincide exactly with those of an authority which is exempt from error, that *his* decisions are exempt from error, is not only an undeniable, but almost an identical proposition;—it is as plain as that things which are equal to the same are equal to each other.

But this, though self-evident as soon as stated, is sometimes lost sight of in practice. A man will speak of himself as being fallible, and as having no expectation of being otherwise. But

his meaning must be (supposing him quite certain that he has an infallible guide, always accessible, and to which he constantly conforms),—his meaning must be, that he *would* be fallible if left to himself; that his exemption from the possibility of error is not inherent, but derived. But actually and practically he does consider himself infallible.

Though the gnomon of a sun-dial has no power in itself to indicate the hour, yet when the sun shines on it, the motions of its shadow must be as correct as those of the sun's rays which it follows. And, in like manner, *he* is infallible, practically, in his belief, who always believes exactly what an infallible Church or leader believes.

This craving, then, I say, for infallibility, predisposes men towards the pretensions, either of a supposed unerring Church, or of those who claim or who promise immediate inspiration. And, accordingly, I have known persons sometimes waver for a time between these two classes of pretensions, and ultimately give in to the one or to the other. And, again, you may find persons changing from the one to the other,

and sometimes thus changing more than once*; yet still always clinging to the confident expectation of finding that infallibility I have been speaking of. They are *inquiring* only after a way of exempting themselves from all further inquiry. Their *care* is only to relieve themselves ultimately from all further need of vigilant care. They are navigating in search of a perfectly safe haven in which the helm may be abandoned, and the vessel left to ride securely, without any need of watching the winds and currents, and of looking out for rocks and shoals. They hope to obtain, in all ages of the Church, that exemption from all need of vigilant circumspection, which was not granted even in the age of the Apostles; since we find that, even when there *were* these infallible guides on earth, Christians are perpetually warned of the danger of mistaking "false apostles" for genuine.

* And it might be added, that one may find instances of the same individual, himself unchanged, exposed to severe censures, at different times, not only from different persons, but even from the same, first for refusing to join the one party, and afterwards for refusing to join the other, most opposed to it.

2. But the promise of such infallible guidance as I have been speaking of, not only meets man's wishes, but, as I have observed above, his conjectures also. When we give the reins to our own feelings and fancies, such a provision appears as probable as it is desirable. If, antecedently to the distinct announcement of any particular Revelation, men were asked what kind of revelation they would *wish* to obtain, and again, what kind of Revelation they would think it the most reasonable and *probable* that God should bestow, they would be likely, I think, to answer *both* questions by saying, "Such a Revelation as should provide some infallible guide on earth, readily accessible to every man; so that no one could possibly be in doubt, on any point, as to what he was required to believe and to do; but should be placed, as it were, on a kind of plain high road, which he would only have to follow steadily, without taking any care to look around him; or, rather, in some kind of vehicle on such a road, in which he would be safely carried to his journey's end, even though asleep, provided he never quitted that vehicle.

"For, a man might say, 'if a book is put into my hands containing a divine revelation, and in which are passages that may be differently understood by different persons,—even by those of learning and ability,—even by men professing each to have earnestly prayed for spiritual guidance towards the right interpretation thereof,—and if, moreover, this book contains, in respect of some points of belief and of conduct, no directions at all,—then there is a manifest *necessity* that I should be provided with an infallible interpreter of this book, who shall be always at hand to be consulted, and ready to teach me, without the possibility of mistake, the right meaning of every passage, and to supply all deficiencies and omissions in the book itself. For otherwise this revelation is, to *me*, no revelation at all. Though the book itself be perfectly free from all admixture of error,—though all that it asserts be true, and all its directions right, still it is no guide for *me*, unless I have an infallible certainty, on each point, what its assertions and directions *are*. It is in vain to tell me that the pole-star is always fixed in the north; I cannot steer my

course by it when it is obscured by clouds, so that I cannot be certain where that star is. I need a *compass* to steer by, which I can consult at all times. There is, therefore, a manifest necessity for an infallible and universally accessible interpreter on earth, as an indispensable accompaniment,—and indeed essential part,—of any divine revelation.'"

Such would be the reasonings, and such the feelings, of a man left to himself to consider what sort of revelation from Heaven would be the most acceptable, and also the most *probable*, —the most adapted to meet his *wishes* and his *wants*. And thus are men predisposed, both by their feelings and their antecedent conjectures, towards the admission of such pretensions as I have above alluded to.

And it may be added, that any one who is thus induced to give himself up implicitly to the guidance of such a supposed infallible authority, without presuming thenceforth to exercise his own judgment on any point relative to religion, or to think for himself at all on such matters,—such a one will be likely to regard this procedure as the very perfection of

pious *humility*,—as a most reverent observance of the rule of "lean not to thine own understanding;" though in reality it is the very error of improperly leaning to our own understanding. For, to resolve to believe that God *must* have dealt with mankind just in the way that *we* could *wish* as the most *desirable*, and in the way that to *us* seems the most *probable*,—this is, in fact, *to set up ourselves as His judges*. It is to dictate to Him, in the spirit of Naaman, who *thought* that the prophet would recover him by a touch; and who *chose* to be healed by the waters of Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, which he deemed better than all the waters of Israel.

But anything that falls in at once with men's *wishes*, and with their *conjectures*, and which also presents itself to them in the guise of a *virtuous humility*,—this they are often found readily and firmly to believe, not only *without* evidence, but *against* all evidence.

And thus it is in the present case. The principle of which I have been speaking,—that every revelation from Heaven necessarily requires, as an indispensable accompaniment, an

infallible interpreter always at hand,—this principle clings so strongly to the minds of many men, that they are even found still to maintain it after they have ceased to believe in any revelation at all, or even in the existence of a God.

There can be, I conceive, no doubt of the fact, that very great numbers of men are to be found,—they are much more numerous in some parts of the Continent than among us * ;—men not deficient in intelligence, nor altogether strangers to reflection, who, while they, for the most part, conform externally to the prevailing religion, are inwardly utter unbelievers in Christianity; yet still hold to the principle,—which, in fact, has had the chief share in *making* them unbelievers,—that the idea of a DIVINE REVELATION implies that of a universally accessible, INFALLIBLE INTERPRETER; and that the one without the other is an absurdity and contradiction.

I have said that it is this principle that has mainly contributed to *make* these men unbe-

* See note A. at the end of this Discourse

lievers. For, when a tolerably intelligent and reflective man has fully satisfied himself that in point of fact no such provision *has* been made,—that no infallible and universally accessible interpreter does exist on earth (and this is a conclusion which even the very words of Paul, which I have taken as a text, would be alone fully sufficient to establish),—when, I say, he has satisfied himself of the *non-existence* of this interpreter, yet still adheres to the principle of its supposed *necessity*, the consequence is inevitable, that he will at once reject all belief of Christianity. The ideas of REVELATION, and of an unerring INTERPRETER, being, in his mind, inseparably conjoined, the overthrow of the one belief cannot but carry the other along with it. Such a person, therefore, will be apt to think it not worth while to examine the reasons in favour of any other form of Christianity, *not* pretending to furnish an infallible interpreter. This,—which, he is fully convinced is essential to a Revelation from Heaven,—is, by some Churches, *claimed*, but not *established*, while the rest do not even claim it. The pretensions of the one, he has listened

to, and deliberately rejected; those of the other he regards as not even worth listening to.

The system, then, of reasoning from our own conjectures as to the necessity of the Most High doing so and so, tends to lead a man to proceed from the rejection of his own form of Christianity to a rejection of revelation altogether. But does it stop here? Does not the same system lead naturally to Atheism also? Experience shews that that consequence, which reason might have anticipated, does often actually take place. He who gives the reins to his own conjectures as to what is *necessary*, and thence draws his conclusions, will be likely to find a *necessity* for such divine interference in the affairs of the world as does not in fact take place. He will deem it no less than necessary, that an omnipotent and all-wise and beneficent Being should interfere to rescue the oppressed from the oppressor,—the corrupted from the corrupter,—to deliver men from such temptations to evil as it is morally impossible they should withstand;—and, in short, to banish *evil* from the universe. And, since this is not done, he draws the inference that there cannot

possibly be a God, and that to believe otherwise is a gross absurdity. Such a belief he may, indeed, consider as useful for keeping up a wholesome awe in the minds of the vulgar; and for their sakes he may outwardly profess Christianity also; even as the heathen philosophers of old endeavoured to keep up the popular superstitions: but a real belief he will regard as something impossible to an intelligent and reflective mind.

I am very far from saying that all, or the greater part, of those who maintain the principle I am speaking of, are Atheists. We all know how common it is for men to fail of carrying out some principle (whether good or bad) which they have adopted;—how common, to maintain the premises, and not perceive the conclusion to which they lead. But the *tendency* of the *principle* itself is what I am speaking of: and the danger is anything but imaginary, of its leading, in fact, as it does naturally and consistently, to Atheism as its ultimate result.

I have said that the non-existence of such an

infallible interpreter as I have been alluding to, is what an intelligent man might be convinced of even by the very passage in the Book of Acts that is before us;—by the absence of any reference or allusion to anything of the kind, in a discourse of the Apostle Paul's, in which he could not have failed to mention it, had it existed. But there are many other considerations from which the same conclusion follows:

1. For instance, the incompetency of men in general to exercise a correct judgment on questians pertaining to religion, is the main argument from which is inferred the necessity of an infallible interpreter. And yet this very argument destroys the ultimate conclusion maintained. For it presupposes that men *are* fit to decide, by their own judgment, that most difficult question, as to the claim of any particular Church, Party, or Person to *be* that interpreter. Certain passages of Scripture are alleged as implying that a certain Church is the infallible guide appointed by Providence to supersede our private judgment, which is incapable of deciding aright as to the meaning of Scripture.

But how am I to know that such is the true sense of those passages? If we *are* competent to judge of their meaning, then our alleged unfitness for judging, and the necessity thence inferred, are done away. If we are *not* competent to judge of the meaning of any doubtful passages, then, though we may admit the necessity of an unerring interpreter, we can never be sure that we have found one.

If,—which I believe is practically the commonest procedure,—we interpret those passages in conformity with the decision of our supposed infallible guide, and, in implicit reliance on that, we are palpably begging the question,—first assuming the infallibility of our guide, and by means of that assumption proceeding to prove it. And the same may be said in reference to those who, instead of any existing Church, appeal to "the Primitive Church," and the "consensus Patrum,"—the common belief of all the orthodox writers of the first ages*.

* The reference so often made to the words of Vincentius Lirinensis,—"quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus," &c.—seems altogether unaccountable. That whatever is believed, and always has been, by all Christians, everywhere, is a

Whether that primitive Church, and those first ages, shall comprehend *three* centuries, or *four*, *five*, *six*, or *seven*; and *which* of the Fathers are to be enrolled among the orthodox, and *what are* the doctrines they taught, in works forty times more voluminous than the Bible, and capable of quite as great a variety of interpretations,—all these are questions to be decided in the first instance, by those who are, by supposition, incompetent judges, and who for that very reason are to rely implicitly on an infallible guide! This is to tell them that, because

part of the Christian faith, is a truism as barren as it is undeniable. It cannot possibly be called in to solve *any question in dispute*; since by its own character it relates expressly and exclusively to such points as *never have* been disputed among Christians.

But I conceive that those who appeal,—or rather, who pretend to appeal,—to this maxim, do, in reality, mean by "all," merely "all the *orthodox*." And who are the orthodox? I suppose, those whom *most* persons accounted such; and as each will be likely to apply that term to those whose doctrines he approves, the result will be, that the belief of the *majority* is to be the stamp of *orthodox belief*; and that this again is to represent *universal* [or catholic] belief; and, finally, that this so-called universal belief is to be the test of Gospel Truth.

On this principle, who were the orthodox and who the true worshippers, in Israel, when Elijah alone was left of the Lord's prophets, while Baal's prophets were 450 men?

they cannot steer their course without a pilot, they must make a voyage to a distant port in order to find one.

And the case is much the same with those who promise, or who lay claim to, such an inspiration from heaven as shall supersede all exercise of reason, and preclude the possibility of error. The exercise of reason is called for in the highest degree, and errors the most fatal are to be dreaded, in deciding on the conflicting claims laid before us,—on the claims of those who, while they teach the most opposite doctrines, all profess alike to be under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit, and all fail in giving proof of it, as the Apostles did, by working sensible miracles in the presence of all, whether believers or unbelievers.

The alleged *necessity*, therefore, of an infallible interpreter, does of itself shut out from a reflecting mind the hope of *obtaining* one. For that necessity is inferred from such a supposed incapacity in us for judging rightly, as must equally unfit us for judging what claim to our confidence those have who offer to guide us.

2. Again, the alleged necessity is, for an infallible interpreter universally and readily *accessible*. And this no Church can even pretend to have provided. Supposing a central infallible Church to exist, it is not one Christian in ten thousand that can put himself in direct communication with its supreme governors. Each individual may, indeed, use its formularies, and may assign to them the same authority as to Scripture; but he can be no more competent to interpret the one than the other, or to supply aright any omissions; he is still in want of an infallible guide to direct him how to conform with unerring exactitude to his Church. And this guide must be, to the great mass of mankind, the *pastor* under whom each is placed. The pastor's conformity to the Church must be taken on his own word. If *he* be either ignorant, or erroneous, or dishonest,—if, in short, every individual pastor be not himself infallible, the Christian people, whose incompetency to judge for themselves has been all along presupposed, may be as much misled as in their perusal of the Scriptures.

3. Moreover, the claim to exemption from *error* and from *dissension*, if put forth by any Church which claims also *universality*, is thereby at once destroyed. If, indeed, any one claims infallibility on the ground of personal *inspiration* in himself, or in the leader he follows, he can only be met by a demand for proof, in the shape of *sensible miracles*, that his pretensions to this inspiration are better founded than those of others who differ from him. But when the two claims, to exemption from error and to universality, are *both* put forward, they mutually destroy each other by their practical incompatibility. If there be any universal Church of which *all professing Christians* are members, even though disobedient members,—subjects and children, even though undutiful and rebellious,—then this Church is manifestly not exempt from *error* and *dissension*; as is plain from the differences and controversies existing among Christians, and the refusal of many of them to submit to the decrees of this Church. If, again, there be any Church that is exempt from error among its members, it is, for the same reason, manifestly not *universal*.

There may, conceivably, be a Church to whose dominion and decisions all Christians *ought* to submit; but unless all *do* thus submit it cannot be properly called *universal* *.

Vain are the attempts made to get rid of this dilemma by urging that all false doctrines are *condemned* by the Authorities of the Church, and that the guilt of schism is incurred by all who do not obey them. Exemption from error, in any community, consists, not in the *condemnation* of error, but in its *non-existence* among the members of that community. Universality consists, not in a *claim* to universal dominion over all Christians, but in the *submission* of all Christians. Otherwise, there is no sect so small and inconsiderable that might not pretend, on equally good grounds, to be the universal and unerring Church. It might plead that its doctrines were received by *all* except *heretics*, and its supremacy acknowledged by *all* except *schismatics*; denouncing all as here-

* The urging of both these pretensions in conjunction, on reasons which profess to establish the one or the other separately, is an instance of what I have called, in the Elements of Logic, Book iii. § 11, the *fallacy of the Thaumatrope*.

tics and schismatics who did *not* receive those doctrines, and submit to that dominion. And this is merely saying, in other words, that all agree with it except those who disagree, and that all submit except such as refuse submission.

The claims, therefore, if so explained, become altogether nugatory. If *not* so explained, but taken in the natural sense of the language employed, they are negatived by undeniable and notorious facts*.

From these and similar considerations a reflecting mind can hardly fail to arrive at the conclusion, that a universally accessible infallible guide, such as shall supersede all exercise of private judgment, and all need of vigilant care and inquiry, and shall preclude all possibility of error, has *not* been, in fact, provided. And if he still cling to the belief of the *necessity* of such a guide as an indispensable adjunct to a divine revelation, his road to infidelity is straight and short†.

Numbers there are, no doubt, who do not

* See note B. at the end of this Discourse.

† See note C. at the end of this Discourse

follow up such principles to their legitimate consequences; many, from habitual want of reflection, and absence of mental cultivation; and others, from resolutely abstaining from all reasoning and all investigation, because they have determined to be believers, and consider their faith to be both the more praiseworthy, and also the more secure, the less they reflect and examine*. They dread the very danger I have been alluding to,—that reasoning will lead to infidelity; and they seek to avoid this danger, not by discarding the false principle from which that reasoning sets out, but by shunning all reasoning, and stifling all inquiry and reflection.

But this freedom from all uneasy doubt,—a desire for which leads to that craving for infallibility I have been speaking of,—this, after all, is not always attained by such a procedure. A lurking suspicion will often remain,—which a man vainly endeavours to stifle,—that the *foundation* is not sound. The super-

* See Essays on some Dangers to Christian Faith, &c. p. 108 [2nd edition], and Elements of Logic, p. 390 [5th edition], for a very curious exemplification of what is here said.

structure, indeed, may be complete. Once granted that the church, sect, party, or leader, we have taken as our guide, is perfectly infallible, and there is an end of all doubts and cares respecting particular points. But an uneasy doubt will sometimes haunt a man,—in spite of his efforts to repress it, and however strenuously he may deny, even to himself, its existence,—whether the infallibility claimed, which is the basis of the whole fabric, be really well established. A suspicion will occasionally cross the mind, however strenuously repelled, "IS THERE NOT A LIE IN MY RIGHT HAND?" And the reluctance often shewn to examine the foundation, and ascertain whether it is really sound, is an indication, not of full confidence in its firmness, but of a lurking suspicion that it will not bear examining.

It is thus that the craving after the mental repose of infallible certainty tends to defeat its own object. Many, however, no doubt, do really enjoy the confident, though groundless, security they boast of. And many, we may expect, will complain of, and censure, and reject, what I have been saying, on the ground

that it is a "cheerless" doctrine. And this charge is, to a certain extent, true. To be told to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," may be less "cheering" than to be told that we have no need for any fear and trembling. When Paul "ceased not for three years to warn every one, night and day, with TEARS," it was not, certainly, because he judged this to be the most *cheering* to his people, but because he knew it to be the most for their real good, and the most conformable to truth. It was precisely because he was aware that pains-taking vigilance is less agreeable than confident and boastful security,—it was for this very reason, doubtless,—that he was so assiduous in his warnings, lest any of his people should be,—as so many are, now, and in every age,—led away blindfold by their wishes, and flattered to their ruin by deceitful teachers. It is a common error, and one which men always need to be put on their guard against, to trust to boastful promises, and to lean upon pleasant and cheering hopes, without examining well whether these promises and hopes can rationally be depended on.

But it is the part of true wisdom not to lose, in a vain effort after what Providence has denied us, the advantages which it does place within our reach.

Difficult indeed it is,—or rather impossible,—for us to understand why God has dealt with Man as He has. We may be unable to answer the question, why the Revelation He has bestowed has not been accompanied by the gift of an infallible interpreter on earth, accessible to all men, and precluding all possibility of doubt as to the meaning of any part of it. It may be hard to explain, why, both in this and in many other most important matters also, Man should have been left to act on his own responsibility, and according to the best of his own fallible judgment; exposed to various dangers, and called on for the exercise of that vigilant care, which, we find, is, in point of fact, often not exercised. We may be unable, in short, to understand *why Earth is not Heaven*;—why EVIL of any kind is permitted to exist.

All this we may be unable to explain; but our inability to explain will not alter facts; and it is for us to make the best use of things

as they *are*, instead of wondering or seeking to understand why they were not made otherwise.

That spurious humility above alluded to, the implicit reliance on fallible man, must be discarded; and true humility must take its place. Instead of considering what, according to our notions, God *must* have done, or *ought* to have done, we should inquire what He *has* done; and what use we are allowed and expected to make of it.

If we inquire whether the Holy Scriptures did really come from Him, we shall find proof abundantly sufficient to satisfy a candid and humble mind; but not sufficient—strange as this may appear to *us*—to *force* conviction on the uncandid and arrogant. And if we inquire for what purposes the Scriptures were given, and how we are to make use of the gift, they will themselves abundantly teach us. They were evidently given us to enlighten the path of those who will open their eyes to the light, and take heed to their steps; but not of such as love darkness better than light, or view the light through the discoloured glass of their own

prejudices and inclinations, or deliver themselves up to be led blindfold by blind guides. They were given, not to supersede, but to exercise, our diligence and watchful care. They abound (as we have seen) in warnings of the danger of perversions and false doctrines. And they bid us Christian ministers "take heed to ourselves and to the flocks committed to our care." *We* are to study, to the best of our power, to attain to the true meaning of them ourselves, and to impart it to our people, but with a full conviction and confession of our own fallibility.

To complain of this,—to reject or undervalue the revelation God has bestowed, urging that it is no revelation to us, or an insufficient one, because unerring certainty is not bestowed also, —because we are required to exercise patient diligence and watchfulness, and candour, and humble self-distrust,—this would be as unreasonable as to disparage and reject the bountiful gift of eye-sight, because men's eyes have sometimes deceived them;—because men have mistaken a picture for the object imitated, or a mirage of the desert for a lake: and have fan-

cied they had the evidence of sight for the sun's motion; and to infer from all this that we ought to blindfold ourselves, and be led henceforth by some guide who pretends to be himself not liable to such deceptions.

The two great volumes,—that of Nature and that of Revelation,—which God has opened before us for our benefit, are in this respect analogous*. Both are, in themselves, exempt from error; but they do not confer complete exemption from all possibility of error on the student of them. As the laws of Nature are in themselves invariable, but yet are sometimes imperfectly known, and sometimes mistaken, by natural philosophers; so the Scriptures are intrinsically infallible, but do not impart infallibility to the student of them. Even by the most learned they are in many parts imperfectly understood; by the "unlearned and unstable" they are liable to be "wrested to their own destruction."

We have indeed the gracious promise of God's Holy Spirit to "help our infirmities,"

* See Essays on some Dangers to Christian Faith, &c. Essay III. s. 5.

both in respect of our faith and of our conduct;—to guard us not only against doctrinal error, but also, no less, against sin;—to further our growth both in *grace*, and also in the *knowledge* of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are sure that, as far as we *are* under the guidance of that Spirit, we cannot but be right both in our belief and our practice *. But how far we *are*, in each instance, thus guided, we must not presume to pronounce with certainty. "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do," (and, we may add, to judge and believe also) "of his good pleasure;" but this is given by the Apostle as a reason, not for sitting down

* There seems no good ground for inferring from our Lord's promise to be with his people "always, even unto the end of the world," that He must have conferred on them, or on some portion of them, *infallibility* in *judgment*, any more than *impeccability* in moral *conduct*; which is, at least, not inferior in importance. The Holy Spirit which He promised should be "given to them that ask it," is not more needed, or more promised, with a view to correctness of *belief*, than to holiness of *life*: and yet, with respect to this last, most men admit that, "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:" why should we not be equally ready to admit that "if we say we have no *error*, we deceive ourselves?" If we utter with sincerity the words "who can tell how oft he *offendeth*? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults!" we shall not fail to add, "who can tell how oft he *mistaketh*?"

in careless and self-confident security, but that we should "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." And this same anxious and diligent care must be shewn, among other things, in our study of God's Holy Word *.

"If we say that we have no sin,"—and equally if we say that we have no error,—"we deceive ourselves:" for whatever part of our conduct, and of our opinions, may be in fact perfectly right, we are not authorized con-

* Every one, doubtless, is led to what is right both in faith and practice, as far as he is led by the Spirit of Christ; but how far he *is*, in each instance, under that guidance, he cannot know with certainty till the day of judgment. While continually aiming at perfection, both in belief and practice, the Christian is never authorized to "count himself to have apprehended." Though he may, in point of fact, be right, he must beware of the arrogance of confidently pronouncing and insisting on his own unerring rectitude, unless he shall have received an immediate revelation, and can produce his credentials as an inspired messenger from God.

As for those who do appeal,—in support of a claim to continued, or to renewed inspiration in their respective Churches, or in the leaders they venerate,—to sensibly miraculous proofs, such as gifts of tongues, gifts of healing, &c., these persons, how much soever they may fail in establishing the miraculous *facts*, are at least consistent and intelligible in the conclusions they maintain. The test they appeal to is fair:—"The God that answereth by fire, let him be God."—*Dangers to Christian Faith, &c.*, Essay III. s. 4, pp. 146, 148.

fidently to pronounce that it is so. "I judge not," says the Apostle Paul, "mine own self, for I know nothing by myself,—(i. e. I am not conscious of any failure in my ministerial duties);—"yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord."

Listen *, then, my Christian friends, to this blessed Apostle; learn what he has taught; and attend to the warnings he has given. And let no one persuade you, that by doing this you will be thrown into distressing and incurable doubts and perplexities. Fear not, that by forbearing to forestall the judgment of the last day,—by not presuming to dictate to the Most High, and boldly to pronounce in what way He *must* have imparted a revelation to man,—by renouncing all pretensions to infallibility, whether an immediate and personal, or a derived infallibility,—by owning yourself to be neither impeccable nor infallible (both claims are alike groundless), and by consenting to undergo those trials of vigilance and of patience which God has appointed for you,—fear not

* See Essays (First Series) on Some Peculiarities of the Christian Religion, pp. 360-362, *note*.

that by this you will forfeit all cheerful hope of final salvation,—all "joy and peace in believing." The reverse of all this is the reality.

As far as any one is conscious of striving, with humble prayer for Divine aid, to do his best, in the way God has directed, he may reasonably hope to be preserved from all fatal errors and deadly sins; and he may trust that any mistakes into which he may have fallen, not through carelessness or perversity, but from mere error of judgment or unavoidable ignorance, will not be imputed to him as sins, but that he will "be accepted according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not."

Those have, in reality, more to dread, who, professing to renounce all private judgment, have based their whole system of faith on human conjectures as to what a Divine Revelation *must necessarily* be; and who have shut their eyes to the many plain warnings of our Lord and his Apostles, to "take heed to ourselves." Paul has declared, that if even "an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel than that which he has delivered, let him be accursed;" and he has left us a written record

of his teaching, with which to compare whatever is proposed for our acceptance as Gospel truth; thus, according to our Lord's precept, judging of the tree by its fruits. Great, then, must be the danger of those who, in fact, *reverse* this precept, and judge of *the fruits by the tree*; by at once concluding, that whatever is taught by the Holy Church, or whatever such and such a person professes to have had revealed to him from Heaven, and to be moved by the Holy Spirit to utter, must be Gospel truth, however at variance with God's written Word.

And as their real danger is great, so they do not always (as I have above observed) succeed even in lulling themselves into complete security. While they crave for more than God has given, and will not be satisfied without that infallible certainty of exemption from error, which would cut off all need of vigilance against error, and of inquiry after truth,—they often (besides building, on a false foundation, a superstructure of error) fail also of that confident repose and peace of mind which they have aimed at. And those, on the other hand,

who, in true humility, set themselves to conform to God's directions, will be partakers of His promised blessings. While such Christians as have sought rather for *peace*,—for mental tranquillity and satisfaction,—than for *truth*, will often fail both of truth and peace, those of the opposite disposition are more likely to attain both, from their gracious Master. He has taught us to "take heed that we be not deceived," and to "beware of false prophets;" and He has promised us His own peace and heavenly comfort. He has bid us watch and pray; He has taught us, through his blessed Apostle, to "take heed to ourselves," and to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" and He has declared, through the same Apostle, that He "worketh in us;" He has bid us "rejoice in hope;" He has promised that He "will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear;" and He has taught us to look forward to the time when we shall no longer "see as by means of a mirror *, darkly, but face to face;"—when we shall

* Δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι.—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

know, "not in part, but even as we are known;"—when faith shall be succeeded by certainty, and hope be ripened into enjoyment. His precepts and His promises go together. His support and comfort are given to those who seek for them in the way He has Himself appointed.

Teach this to your people, you, my Brethren, who are engaged, or are about to engage, in the Sacred Ministry. Teach them to trust in God, and not transfer their allegiance to uninspired Man. Instruct them to the best of your ability, according to your solemn vow, out of the Scriptures. Refer them to these; and teach them to search the Scriptures for themselves (like the Beræans of old), "to see whether those things be so" which they shall have heard from you; and warn them not to expect infallibility in themselves, or in you, or in any uninspired man, but to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is right;" and caution them against being led away, by bold assertions and arrogant pretensions, into those corruptions of Gospel truth which will always, from time to time, be found arising within

the Church. So shall they be enabled to "take up the serpents" they will meet with; and "if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them."

Take heed, then, my Brethren, to yourselves, and to the flock over which you are appointed overseers; watch, and remember ever the solemn warnings Paul has given us: and may you be enabled, like him, at the close of your ministry, to stand "pure from the blood of all men."

NOTE A. TO PAGE 497.

Many also there are, I am convinced, in this country, and some in the Continental States, by whom the "infallibility of the Church" is understood in the same sense as the constitutional maxim that "the king can do no wrong;" by which every one understands, not that the sovereign is personally exempt from error, but that there is no *superior authority on earth* to which he is responsible, and to which appeal can be made against any exercise of his lawful prerogative; and that to establish any such authority would be to subvert the Constitution for no object; since it would be, after all, only setting up as supreme one fallible man or Body of men instead of another. In like manner, some probably consider it best that there should be, in religious matters, some one supreme authority on earth, which, though not really infallible, should be treated as if it were so; that is, that its decisions should be final and without appeal, and binding on all Christians. This, they conceive, is better than that interminable controversies, arising out of the differences of men's private judgments, should be suffered to arise, and to continue unchecked. And, no doubt, peace and unanimity might be thus produced, though at the expense of truth,—I mean sincere conviction of truth, —and at the price of transferring to fallible man that devotion which is due to God only, if all Christians throughout the world would agree to acquiesce in this feigned infallibility. But, as it is, truth and genuine piety are sacrificed for the sake of an universal peace and agreement, which (as is subsequently pointed out) are not attained after all.

NOTE B. TO PAGE 508.

I am well aware that when the two claims,—that to universality, and that to exemption from dissension and from error,—are brought forward *in conjunction*, and it is undertaken to reconcile them with each other, it is usual to explain one or both of them in a sense different from the obvious and natural meaning of the words, so as to render the two claims compatible. Then it is that we are told that "Catholic" or "Universal" means only the religion of a considerable *majority* of professing Christians, or the religion the most *widely diffused* throughout Christendom: or we are told that the Universal Church means merely that which all professed Christians *ought* to belong to; and that adults of sound mind who have received Christian baptism, and deliberately profess Christianity, are not necessarily members of the Universal Church, or Christians at all.

And we are also told that exemption from dissension and from error belongs to those only who *submit* in all points to the decisions of the rulers of the Catholic Church. And doubtless if all mankind, or any number of men, would but come to a perfect agreement in *any* one religion,—be it *true or false*,—they could not but be exempt from religious dissension, and, if not from error, at least from anything that they themselves would account an error.

But surely this is to "keep the word of promise to the ear, and break it to the hope." It is not in any such sense that the pretensions I have been speaking of are usually put forth, and naturally understood, when *taken separately*. And it is not under any such explanations as the above, that those pretensions are found so alluring and so satisfactory as, to a great number of persons, they are; but in the natural and ordinary sense of the words. The expression "Catholic," or "Universal," Church is naturally understood to denote that

which comprehends all Christians. And by the word Christians is understood those who acknowledge and professedly embrace the religion founded by Jesus Christ. And those who designate any of these as Heretics are so far from denying them the title of Christians (though unsound and perverted Christians), that they imply it; since Pagans or avowed Atheists are never reckoned Heretics.

I am not, be it observed, defending this use of the word "Christian" as the most *advisable* to be adopted, if we were framing a new language. It might, we will suppose, have been advisable so to define the term that no two Christian Sects or Churches should apply it to the same persons. I am simply stating a *fact* as to the actual sense conveyed by the word in our *existing language*. And that such is the sense conveyed by it, is as much a fact as that we actually call the ninth month of the year September, and the tenth October; though if we were remodelling our language, the impropriety of such names would be obvious.

And again, exemption from dissension and from error naturally conveys the idea, not of these evils being *condemned* by certain Authorities when they arise, but of their never arising at all.

And it is in these obvious and natural senses of the words that the above pretensions are, in general,—when taken separately,—put forth with boastful confidence, and prove so attractive and so consolatory to the minds of many, as to be at once admitted without any close scrutiny as to how far they are well-founded.

But when the two claims are brought into juxta-position, and it is inquired how far they are *compatible*, then they are explained away in the manner above alluded to. The promise is made in one sense, and kept in the other.

I will take the liberty of subjoining an extract relating to this point from the Appendix to the second Essay on the Kingdom of Christ.

"I have seen reproaches full of scornful exultation cast on Protestants for having recourse, when treating of the subject of Church-government, to reasonings drawn from general views of Human Nature, and to illustrations from secular affairs: and for calculating what are likely to be the decisions of a Synod so and so constituted, without adverting to the promises of Divine presence and protection to the Church, and without expressing confidence of providential interpositions to secure it from discord, error, and other evils.

"This kind of language has, at the first glance, a plausible air; and is well calculated,—one cannot but think, designed, —to impose on pious and well-intentioned, but ignorant, weak, and unreflecting minds among the multitude. But a sober examination will shew it to be either wholly irrelevant to the matter in hand, or else a mere groundless pretence.

"It is indeed true that the Lord has promised to be with his People 'even unto the end of the world,' and that 'the Gates of Hell' (*i. e.* Death) 'shall not prevail against his Church;' that is, that Christianity shall never become extinct. And his 'Spirit which helpeth our infirmities' will doubtless be granted to such as sincerely exert themselves in his cause: though not necessarily so as to crown those exertions with such complete success, as, we know, was not granted to the Apostles themselves. Our efforts, however, in that cause, whether He in his unsearchable wisdom shall see fit to make them a greater or a less benefit to others, will doubtless, as far as regards ourselves, be accepted by him. And a pious confidence in whatever God has really promised, Protestants do not fail to inculcate on suitable occasions.

"But when the question is as to the probable results of such and such a procedure in a Synod, and as to the measures likely to be adopted by a Government so and so constituted, it would manifestly be irrelevant to dwell on those general promises of the divine blessing. If there were a question what means should be used to protect a certain district from

hurtful inundations, no one would think of cutting short the discussion by a reference to the promise made to Noah, that the whole Earth should never again be laid waste by a deluge. It is evident, therefore, that the reproaches I have alluded to must be understood as having reference to (that which alone is pertinent to the present question) confidence in a promise of supernatural interference to secure the Church for ever from strife, schism, and corruption.

"And certainly if we *had* received any such promise, all apprehensions, all calculations of probabilities,—all reasonings from the analogy of other human transactions, would be superseded; and we should have only to 'stand still and see the salvation of God.'

"But every one, except the grossly ignorant and unthinking, must be well aware that no such promise has ever been *fulfilled*, and consequently (if the Scriptures are to be taken as a record of divine truth) that none such was ever *made*.

"We find the Apostle Paul declaring that 'there must needs be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest;' we find him labouring to repress the irregularities and party spirit, which even in his own time had crept into the Church of Corinth; and warning the Elders of Ephesus and Miletus to 'take heed, because after his departure grievous wolves would enter into the fold.' Corruptions in doctrine, disorders, dissension, and insubordination, are evils of which he is continually giving notice to his People as what they must be prepared to encounter.

"And when we look to the ecclesiastical history of subsequent Ages—exhibiting the sad spectacle of contests, almost equally dividing the Church, between the Arians, for instance, and the Athanasians, on points of doctrine, and between the Donatists and their opponents, on a question of ecclesiastical Polity,—besides the mutual anathemas of the Eastern and Western Churches, and besides all the cabals and intrigues, and secular motives, and evil passions, which have notoriously

found their way into Councils, and Conclaves, and ecclesiastical Courts—when we contemplate all this, we see but too well what reason the Apostle had for his warnings.

"But there is no need in the present case to resort to ancient history. The very existence of *Protestants* (to say nothing of the Greek Church) is sufficient to nullify, in respect of the Church of Rome at least, the notion of an exemption from error and from schism being promised to *that*, as to the Universal or Catholic Church. For the Church of Rome claims all professing Christians as properly belonging to it; considering Protestants as children, though disobedient children;—subjects, though revolted subjects. The very rise, therefore, and continued existence, of Protestantism, proves the non-existence in the Catholic Church (if the Church of Rome be supposed such) of any immunity from heresy and schism. And if it be attempted to avoid this conclusion by allowing that Protestants and members of the Greek Church are *not* to be regarded as in any way belonging to the Church of Rome, then the pretensions of that Church to be *the Catholic* (*i. e.* Universal) Church, must be given up.

"Whatever plausibility therefore there may appear at first sight in the pretensions, *separately* taken, of that Church, on the one hand to perfect purity of doctrine, and unity, and on the other hand to Universality, it is evident that both *conjointly* cannot be maintained with even any show of reason. Either the one or the other must be abandoned. If Protestants, and members of the Greek, the Armenian, and other Churches, do *not* belong to the Romish Church, it cannot be *Universal;* if (which is what its advocates actually maintain) all Christians do belong to it, then, it manifestly is not exempt from *divisions*, and contrariety of doctrine. It is in vain (as far as the present question is concerned) to urge that the doctrine and procedure of Protestants, &c., are *condemned* by the authorities of the Church of Rome, and by

all its *sound* members. For an *exemption* from a certain evil must consist, not, in its being *censured* when it arises, but in its *not arising* at all. Indeed it would be very easy,—and also quite nugatory,—for any Church whatever to set up the boast that its doctrines are received by all,—except those who dissent from them; and that all submit to its authority, —except those who refuse submission.

"The extraordinary Providence, therefore, which is boasted of as securing the true Church from division and from error, and which Protestants are reproached with not trusting to or claiming, has evidently no existence in the very Church to which those who utter the reproach belong. And one can hardly doubt that they must themselves be aware of this; and that when they speak, in a tone of exulting confidence, of the miraculous exemption of their Church from the inroads of false doctrine and dissension, they are only seeking to quiet the minds of the unthinking Vulgar with a delusive consolation.

"How far this kind of language may work an opposite effect on the minds of the more educated Classes,—how far the great prevalence of infidelity among those Classes on the Continent may be accounted for by their continually hearing (from those who, they will conclude, ought to know what their own Scriptures say) of *promises* having been made to the Church which, it is evident, as a matter of experience, have *not* been fulfilled, is an inquiry into which I will not now enter. My own conviction is, that every kind of pious fraud is as much at variance, ultimately, with sound policy, as it is with Christian principle."

NOTE C. TO PAGE 508.

It is worth remarking, that a very great additional danger of infidelity exists in all those countries, in which it is an established principle that the profession of the religion which

the Government sanctions, may, and should be enforced by *coercive* means, and that it is the right and duty of the civil magistrate to prohibit and forcibly repress all departure from it. I do not doubt, indeed, that many persons are sincere believers in Christianity, who yet maintain this principle; but the principle itself,—besides being wholly at variance with the spirit of Christianity,—acts also as a kind of specific poison to sincere belief. Like a pestilential atmosphere, it makes gradual and imperceptible advances in debilitating the system, and tainting the inmost springs of life, more or less speedily according to the constitution of each individual; and carries off its victims one by one, without external blow, by a secret internal decay.

One mode in which this cause operates is, by destroying the support which each man's conviction ordinarily derives, and may fairly and reasonably derive, from that of his neighbours. For, whatever any one is *compelled* to profess, we cannot rationally feel sure that he does not inwardly disbelieve; since we know that if he does disbelieve it he dares not openly say so.

But it is in another way that the principle in question produces its most deleterious effects. In proportion as men are accustomed to regard it as right that outward profession should be enforced, they will come to consider this *profession* as everything, and inward belief,—which *cannot* be enforced,—as insignificant. *Conformity* will be regarded as the great object, and *truth* as a matter we need not be concerned about.

"The highest truth," says Dr. Arnold, "if professed by one who believes it not in his heart, is, to him, a lie, and he sins greatly by professing it. Let us try as much as we will to convince our neighbours; but let us beware of influencing their conduct when we fail in influencing their convictions. He who bribes or frightens his neighbour into doing an act which no good man would do for reward or from fear, is

tempting his neighbour to sin; he is assisting to lower and to harden his conscience,—to make him act for the favour and from the fear of man, instead of for the favour and from the fear of God; and if this be a sin in him, it is a double sin in us to tempt him to do it." And any one whose conscience has been thus lowered,—who has been so long habituated to this sin as to cease to consider it as a sin,—will have cast aside all thoughts of sincerity in religious profession, either in himself on in others; and will regard it as even a duty (like the ancient heathen philosophers) to conform to the religion of his country for the sake of the public good.

It is mere trifling and evasion to pretend (as some have done) to qualify the principle, by saying that the Government is to enforce a *true* religion, and not any other; since, of course, each Government will decide and proclaim that to be the true one, which it patronizes; and from its decisions there is no appeal. If it has a *right*, then, to make and enforce these decrees,—if it be, as some express it, the duty of a Government to *provide* a true religion for the subjects, in the sense of deciding what religion they shall *be obliged*, under a penalty, to adhere to,—and if it be the *duty* of the subjects, as well as their interest, to acquiesce (as it must be if Government *have* this right; since *right* and *duty* imply each other),—then, since different, and even opposite religions may be, and in fact are, in different Countries, thus enforced, all of which cannot be true, but all of which, each in its own Country, men are *bound* to profess, a complete disconnexion is thus effected between religious profession and truth. For it is utterly impossible, on the above principles, that there can be any *one* true religion revealed from heaven which it is the duty of every individual to adopt. All must be mere creatures of human legislation for the purposes of State policy.

And this, I suppose, was the meaning of a member of the Legislature, of some celebrity, who is reported to have said that he believed all religions to be true, and all equally true.

That they could, all and each, be really from Heaven, their palpable discrepancy renders clearly impossible; and, therefore, if they are all on a level, it must follow that none of them is a real revelation. "All equally true" must have meant "all equally false." But all,—I suppose he meant,—are alike suited to keep the Vulgar in salutary awe, and to gratify a certain craving in their minds after some superhuman object of veneration.

This seems to be just that description of infidelity which the principle I have been speaking of,—that of compulsory conformity,—often actually produces, and always tends to generate and to foster. [See Essays on the Difficulties of St. Paul's Writings, &c., Appendix, note E.]

SERMON XIX.

CHRISTIAN SAINTS,

AS DESCRIBED IN

THE NEW TESTAMENT*.

ROM. I. 1, 7.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called [*to be*] *an Apostle . . . . . to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called* [*to be*] *Saints.*

THE opening addresses of the Apostolic Epistles contain more instruction, and more matter for useful meditation, than some readers of Scripture are aware. And, especially, the *titles* applied to the persons each Apostle is writing to, tend, incidentally, to throw much valuable light on the history, and on the whole

* This Sermon, delivered in St. Patrick's Cathedral, was published by the Additional-Curates'-Fund-Society for Ireland, in aid of their funds, by the permission of the Preacher.

character, of the Gospel dispensation. They indicate to us what were the ideas most familiar to the mind of the writer, and which he expected, or at least intended, to be the most habitually impressed on the mind of the reader. And this is more particularly the case in respect of any remarkable words or phrases that occur *frequently*, and are repeated in Epistles addressed to different and distant Churches. Appellations thus commonly employed, must, we may conclude, express something essential to the religion of the Gospel; and it is, therefore, most important to ascertain their true import, and full force.

Now in looking over the openings of the several Epistles of Paul, you will find that in the far greater part of them he applies the title of SAINTS to the persons he is addressing.

The Romans, and also the Corinthians, he addresses as "called saints*:" he applies the title of saints to the Philippians, to the Colossians, and to the Ephesians: besides which, he

* The words "to be," which were inserted by our translators, they have printed in italics, to denote that there is no corresponding word in the original

several times uses the same title at the close of an Epistle, in reference to those whose remembrances he gives: "all the saints salute you."

With respect to his address to the Ephesians, "to the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus," it is worth remarking that our translation might naturally lead the reader to suppose the Apostle to be addressing his Epistle to *two* distinct classes of persons:— "to the *saints* which are at Ephesus, and to the *faithful* in Christ Jesus." But the original will not bear that sense. The exact rendering would be, "to the saints (*i. e.* the holy), even the believers in Christ Jesus, who are at Ephesus." The word "faithful," I may observe, by the way, was used in the times when our translators wrote, in a sense which it has now lost, to signify "a believer." Thus, in one of the prayers at the close of the Communion-service, we read of "the blessed company of all faithful people;" and again, in the 19th Article, a Church is defined, "a congregation of faithful men:" meaning, evidently, in both places, "believers in Christ."

Who then were those Saints and Believers to

whom the Apostle addresses his Epistles? Manifestly, not certain persons of distinguished holiness, beyond the rest of the Christians; for he takes occasion to rebuke several of those he addresses, for their irregularities and grievous sins. It is plain that he uses the term as exactly equivalent to *Christians*:—as applying to all who had professed Christianity and been baptized into the Christian Church. And the same may be said of several other terms which are applied by him, and by the other sacred writers, to what we now call Christians. They are often addressed as the *Brethren*, the *Elect* [or chosen], the *Called*, and the *Disciples*. But it is very remarkable that amidst all this variety of appellations, they are never once addressed by that of Christians, which has been, for so many ages, their constant designation. Thrice only does the word occur in the New Testament; and never, as applied by Christians to one another. We find it mentioned, in Acts xi., as the title for the first time bestowed on the Disciples at Antioch: evidently, by the Romans, as the name is of Latin formation. Again, we find Agrippa saying to Paul, "Almost thou

persuadest me to be a Christian." And lastly, we find the Apostle Peter adverting to it as the designation, among the unbelieving heathen rulers, of a *crime* for which the Believers suffered persecution. He exhorts them to take care that none of them suffer "as a murderer, a thief, or an evil-doer; but if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed."

The title then, was, it appears, perfectly well known in the Apostolic age; and it was not held as a term of reproach among Christians; for they gloried in the name of Christ; but yet they never applied it, as we now do, to one another.

Now this fact (however it is to be accounted for, or whether we can account for it at all or not,) is one from which we may draw an important conclusion as to the *antiquity* of the books of the New Testament. Suppose these books had been, as some daring speculators have presumed to conjecture, not really composed in the apostolic age, by the persons whose names they bear, but compiled in the second, third, or fourth century, out of traditions afloat in the Church, and then fathered

upon the Apostles and Evangelists, by fraud, carelessness, and ignorance:—suppose this had been the case, how certain it is that we should have found in these books the word "*Christians*," as commonly applied by Christians, to each other, as we know it was in those ages. For the word *is* thus employed by the writers of those ages, and of all subsequent times, whose works have come down to us, almost as commonly as in the present day. Any compiler, therefore, in those ages, making up a pretended original book out of floating traditions, would have been morally certain to apply the title "*Christians*," whenever he had occasion, just as he and all those around him had been accustomed to do.

We have here, therefore, a complete refutation of that rash conjecture I have been alluding to. The absence, throughout all the New Testament writings, of the word "*Christian*," as applied by Christians to each other, alone furnishes, even to a plain unlearned reader, a complete proof of the antiquity of those writings.

And the anxiety of infidels to disprove that

antiquity shews plainly how they despair of contending, in any other way, against their *truth*. Such accounts as these books contain of a multitude of wonderful events, could never possibly (if false) have been circulated without detection, *at the very time* when those events are described as occurring.

As for the cause why the Apostles did not apply to their converts the title of Christians, even if we should be unable to offer any conjecture as to that, the argument for the antiquity of the New Testament remains (as I have said) untouched. Be the cause what it may, the fact is certain, that shortly after the apostolic age, and from thence downwards, to the present day, all Christian writers have applied the title of Christians, just as we do now; and that it never is so applied in any of twenty-seven books of the New Testament; which, consequently, must have been written in the very days of the Apostles. But I think we may perceive, on attentive examination, what the cause was of this procedure of the Apostles.

The name of Christians came into use (as I have said) first, at Antioch in Syria; where a

Church was founded, consisting, in a great measure, of Gentile converts, whose admission into the Gospel covenant had just before been announced to the Apostle Peter. And this it was that seems to have occasioned the name to arise. In the previous period of the Church,—for about the first seven years,—the Disciples being all Jews, the Romans were not likely to think it worth while to give them any other appellation than "*Jews.*" They did not trouble themselves about the different religious sects of a people they despised*. But when they found a large and increasing body of men who consisted of both Jews and *Gentiles*, it became necessary to distinguish them by some name; and, naturally enough, they called them after their leader, Christ: which, though not his proper *name*, but his *title*, the Romans probably mistook for his name. I have already observed that the word Christian is of Latin formation, and must therefore have been coined by the Romans. But the same thing will appear, also, from the impossibility of its having

* See Dr. Hinds' History of the Rise of Christianity.

originated with any other class of men. The Christians themselves certainly could not have been its inventors, since, as we have seen, they never used it. And the unbelieving Jews would never have employed a title which condemned themselves, by implying that *Jesus of Nazareth* was indeed *the Christ*. To have called his disciples Christians, (i. e. followers of the Christ,) would have been to acknowledge Him as the Christ; which was the very point the unbelieving Jews would not admit. They accordingly called his disciples Nazarenes; as you may see in Acts xxiv., where Paul is denounced as "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes," and this is the appellation which, down to this day, they prefer applying to us.

Since, therefore, the title of Christian could not have been introduced, either by the Christians themselves, or by the unbelieving Jews, it remains that it must have originated with the unconverted Gentiles; viz., the Romans; who found it requisite, for the first time, to give a name to a class of men comprehending both Jews by nation and Gentiles.

Now the admission of the Gentiles into the

Church, (which is what gave occasion for the origin of the title of "*Christian*"), was, as you may plainly see in the narrative of the Book of Acts, and in the Epistles, the most wonderful and unexpected event to all parties in that age, and the one which was the most revolting to Jewish prejudices. No point of faith did they hold more pertinaciously, (as, indeed, the unbelieving Jews do to this day,) than that the Law of Moses, as originally delivered, was to remain in full force to the end of the world. And the promised Christ [or Messiah] they looked for as the deliverer of the Israelites by birth, together with such proselytes as should have made themselves a portion of God's People Israel, by embracing the whole Levitical Law. That the unclean and despised Gentiles should be admitted to equal privileges with the Jews, and that, without conforming to the Levitical Law, was so abhorrent to all their prejudices, that (as you may see in Acts x. and xi.) the Apostles themselves had very great difficulty in admitting it; and, afterwards, (as you may see in Acts xv., and in the Epistle to the Galatians,) a great struggle

was made, to confine, at least the highest privileges of the Gospel, to Jews and those proselytes who should have completely embraced Judaism.

The sufferings and death of the Christ, whom they had looked for as a mighty temporal deliverer; and again, the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles to a complete equality with believing Jews: these were the two chief stumbling-blocks to the greater part of the Jewish nation. All their hopes, and expectations, and interpretations of prophecy, were utterly at variance with such a Gospel as this. And we cannot doubt that the objection constantly in their mouths would be, that such a Gospel implied a *change of purpose* in the Most High; —that the Christian preachers represented Him as having violated his promises to the Israelites, and introduced a *new* religion, at variance with the original Dispensation.

Accordingly, we find the Apostle Paul meeting this objection by continually referring to the prophecies, to show that the Lord Jesus had (as He Himself expresses it) "come not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil

them;"—that the prophecies,—though they had not been so understood,—did really point both to a *suffering* Messiah, and at the call of the Gentiles "to be fellow-heirs" of the promises; being (as Peter expresses it) "elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" i.e. all along designed by Him to be enrolled among his Elect [or chosen] people. And this is what Paul speaks of as "the *mystery* of the Gospel; which had been hidden from the foundation of the world, but now is made manifest." And, in his speech before Agrippa, he gives a summary of his preaching: that he taught "none other things than what Moses and the Prophets did say should be; that the Christ should *suffer*," (this was one of the two great stumbling-blocks), "and should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the People," (i.e. God's People, Israel,) "and to the *Gentiles*:" this was the other great stumbling-block. And it was accordingly his being the chief Apostle of the *Gentiles* that exposed him to so much bitterer persecution than the rest. In support of these doctrines, he appeals to the Prophets: "King Agrippa, believest

thou the Prophets?") maintaining that the Gospel is no new religion, opposed to the Old Dispensation, but an enlargement and completion of the Old; not a destroying, but a fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets.

Now in order to impress this the more fully on the minds of the Disciples, who were continually in danger of being misled by Judaizing teachers, nothing can be more natural than that the Apostles should have taken the precaution, which we find, in point of fact, they do take, of abstaining from the use of any *new* title, such as that of Christians, and confining themselves altogether to those titles which were *applied to God's People of old*. We find, in the Old Testament, the Israelites perpetually called "Brethren," as being literally children of Israel after the flesh; they are also designated the "Called," and "Chosen," [or "Elect,"] People of God; not as being predestinated absolutely to obtain His favour, but as being selected for certain high *privileges and advantages*, through which they might, if they failed not on their part, obtain extraordinary favour. And they are also called a *holy* people, i. e.

Saints, not as denoting that they personally excelled in holiness of character; but in the same sense in which certain *places* were called "holy," *dedicated*, and set apart, to God's service. All these titles accordingly, the Apostles applied to Christians of whatever nation; to point out to them that all are now alike admitted to the privileges of the ancient Church [or Congregation, as the word is rendered in our version of the Old Testament] of Israel; only, with great additional ones; all being "*brethren*," as being God's adopted children: ("as many as received Him," says the Evangelist John, "to them gave He power to become the Sons of God,") all being God's "Elect [or 'Chosen,'] people;" all being Saints, or "Holy," in the sense of being solemnly dedicated to His service, as the Israelites had been of old; and all being (as Paul calls them, in Galatians) "the Israel of God." "If," says he, "ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and heirs according to the promise." "Ye are," says Peter, "a chosen generation, [the word is the same which is elsewhere rendered by our translators 'Elect,'] a royal priesthood,

a holy nation, [the word here rendered 'holy,' is the same which is elsewhere translated 'Saints,'] which before were not a People, but now are the People of God."

Such, I have no doubt, was the reason of the Apostles for confining themselves to these names, instead of employing that of Christians. And this will explain also why, when these reasons had no longer the same force, these names became less employed, and that of "*Christian*" came gradually into ordinary use. When Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed, and the Jewish nation was dispersed, and the far greater number of Christians were Gentiles, the danger of Judaizing teachers, which in Paul's time was so great, seems almost to have died away; and Christians seem to have felt, (whether rightly or wrongly), that there was no longer any need of reminding them of what was now become so familiar to them, though originally a great paradox, that men of all nations had succeeded to the full privileges which had originally been confined to the Jews, and were all admitted alike to be God's people. And hence, immediately after the age of the

Apostles, the term Christians gradually began to come into use among themselves, as it remains down to this day.

In conformity with what I have been saying, you will observe that Paul constantly uses these appellations, not as implying that his hearers *had* attained superior Christian excellence, but as suggesting a *motive* for their exerting themselves to attain it. He never tells any of them to expect any "*call*," but addresses them all as "called Saints," and exhorts them to "*walk worthy* of the vocation whereto they are called." He never speaks of their *becoming* elect, but exhorts them (Col. iii. 12) "*as* the elect of God, holy, [or Saints], to put on mercy, kindness, and humbleness," and to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure." Never does he exhort them to *be* Saints*, but to "walk as *becometh* Saints;" never, to *enter into* any brotherhood, but "to *love as* brethren."

* The Apostle Peter in one passage uses the word αγιοι ["holy" or "Saints"] in the sense of that personal holiness of life to which he exhorts his hearers to aim. There may perhaps be one or two other instances of its being so employed by the sacred writers; but the other sense—the one above described—is undoubtedly the ordinary one.

The titles, in short, which he applies, all denote their *privileges* and their *duties*; not their good *use* of those privileges, and faithful *performance* of those duties. It is to that use and that performance that he *exhorts* them. And he warns them (*e.g.* 1 Cor. x.), from the example of God's people of old, against neglecting or abusing their high privileges. All the Israelites were God's "Chosen" [or Elect], but "with most of them* God was not well pleased," as was shown by their being overthrown in the wilderness.—"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

It has happened, I think unfortunately, that in adopting the designation of "*Christians*" (to which there can be no objection) we have, at the same time, changed in a great degree the signification of the term "*Saints*." It is now generally used to denote, not all Christians,—all who have been dedicated to Christ in baptism,—but some particular Christians distinguished from the rest, either as having received the gift of inspiration,—as we speak

* τοις πλείοσιν.

of *Saint* Matthew, *Saint* Mark, *Saint* Paul, and the rest of the Apostles and Evangelists,—or else as being supposed to possess an extraordinary degree or kind of personal holiness, beyond what is expected of ordinary Christians. These notions have, in their most exaggerated form, led to the practice which unhappily prevails, and has for many ages prevailed, among a very large portion of the Christian world, of invoking deceased Saints, and begging their intercession with the Most High; thus conferring on his creatures the attribute of omnipresence—each of these Saints being supposed to be able to hear the invocations of millions of votaries in many thousand different parts of the world, who are addressing him at the same time!

But even those who have kept clear of this error are yet often found attributing to those whom they designate "Saints," such a degree and kind of personal holiness as is far from being required or expected of Christians in general, and which it would be most extravagant for them to aim at or hope for.

One may often, accordingly, hear persons

professing to have no pretensions to be considered as *Saints*, or thought of ever becoming such; though at the same time they would be indignant at not being considered as *Christians*. And yet the Apostles, as we have seen, always used the word Saints as equivalent to what we mean by Christians.

What would have been, think you, the astonishment of Paul, could he now return to the earth, at hearing professed believers in Christ disavowing all claim to the title of "Saint"? This horror and astonishment would indeed be much diminished when he came to understand that we use the word in a very different sense from his. But without denying our right to make such a change, I cannot but think he would have questioned the wisdom of doing so in this instance. Evangelists, and Prophets, and Apostles, I think he would consider as best distinguished by the very titles of "Evangelist" and "Prophet" and "Apostle," rather than by that of "Saint," which in Scripture is applied to every one of God's People—to every member of what is called in the oldest of the Creeds, "the Holy Catholic Church, the

Communion of Saints." For the saintship of the Apostles and Evangelists consisted (according to the language of Scripture) not in what was peculiar to *them*, but in what was common to them with others; not in their inspiration and other miraculous gifts, but in those gifts offered to Christians generally, which are of incomparably higher value. And of this, at least, I cannot doubt; that Paul would earnestly warn us against being misled by our own use of language;—against falling into confusion of thought, and into serious error respecting *things*, through the careless employment of *words*. Most earnestly, we may be assured, would he warn us that Christianity is not two religions,—one for ordinary men, and another for Saints,—but one single religion, designed for all men alike, and not setting up several different standards of personal holiness for different persons. He would warn us against being led to imagine that there are among the number of Christians certain classes or parties, or orders of men, of whom a Christian life—a conformity of character to the Gospel-precepts—is *more* required, or is *less* required,

than of the generality. "They that are Christ's (says this Apostle) have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He speaks not, you observe, of what can be done, and is required to be done, by certain pre-eminent Saints, but of "*any man*" who has enlisted at baptism under the banner of Christ crucified. In the sense in which Paul accounted himself a Saint, in that sense he calls all Christians Saints.

As for the saintship which consists in the possession of inspiration from Heaven, or of any other miraculous gifts, great is the mistake of imagining that such gifts render the possessor necessarily acceptable in God's sight, and are to be regarded as a *substitute* for moral holiness of character; or again, that these supernatural gifts necessarily *ensure* personal holiness; or again, that the *absence* of such gifts renders a less degree of personal holiness sufficient. God enabled some to speak in new languages; of them it was required that they should use the gift to his glory, and the good

of their fellow-creatures, in preaching the Gospel throughout the world. To others was "given the gift of healing, by the same Spirit;" it was *their* task to heal the sick accordingly. To others is given *only* the knowledge of the Gospel, and the promise of Divine aid to help their infirmities, and to enable them to conform their own heart and life to the precepts and example of their Lord: and these also are required thus to conform, and to make the best use of their own advantages Nowhere are we told that a less degree of Christian virtue is requisite in one who does not possess miraculous endowments. For, these endowments were designed, not for the benefit of the possessor, but of his neighbours. Miracles were the instruments the Lord employed for the propagation of his Gospel among all nations; that men might glorify, not the man who exercised such superhuman powers, but God. The inspired preachers and writers were inspired for the purpose of instructing *us* in the Gospel of their Divine Master.

But would it not be presumptuous for any one of *us* in these days to pretend to be as

good a Christian as Paul or Peter, or any other of those we call emphatically "Saints"?

Presumptuous indeed it would be to *pretend* to a high degree of Christian excellence—to "count oneself to *have* apprehended:" but to *aim* at attaining that excellence, through divine assistance, is so far from being presumptuous, that there is more presumption in cherishing a hope of God's favour without it. It would indeed be a most impious presumption for one of us to pretend to inspiration; because we have it not. It would be presumptuous for one of us to expect to be as eminent an instrument in propagating the Gospel among all nations as the Apostle Paul; because we are not so qualified by miraculous gifts as he was. But we are *not* less enabled, or less bound, each one of us, himself to perform his own Christian duties—to lead a Christian life, and to have a Christian heart; and in short (as Paul expresses it) to "walk as becometh Saints," than the Apostles themselves. And there is great and dangerous presumption in the false humility of hoping for acceptance with our Great Master while we lower our own standard

of personal Christian holiness, and claim an exemption from the duty of aiming at the highest degree of Christian moral excellence, on the ground that we are not gifted with miraculous powers.

These powers were given, as I have said, not for the benefit of the possessors, but of others, for *their* conviction and instruction. And the possession of these miraculous gifts neither *proved* any one to be personally pure and holy in heart, nor necessarily *made* him such. Judas Iscariot, we should remember, exercised, in common with the other Apostles, miraculous powers, during our Lord's abode on earth. Many of the Corinthians, again, are severely rebuked by Paul for their strange abuse of some of their miraculous gifts. The Lord Jesus himself speaks of his finally disowning, as "workers of iniquity," some who should have "done many mighty works in his name." And Paul speaks strongly of his own sedulous care as to his own life, "lest by any means after having preached to others, he should himself become a castaway."

Let no one therefore suppose either that

more, or that *less*, of Christian virtue is requisite for an Apostle or Prophet than for an uninspired Christian. Both alike are, in the scriptural sense of the word, "Saints;" and both alike are enabled, and therefore required, to "walk as becometh Saints." Whether a man have received heavenly light by immediate personal inspiration, or through the words of an inspired Evangelist, in either case he *has* been blessed with that light, and both are required to live "as children of the light." Those who have no power to cast out evil spirits from the possessed, are yet enabled and required to cast them out from themselves—to "resist the Devil, and he will flee from them." Those who have no miraculous gifts of healing the sick and cleansing the leprous, are yet empowered, and therefore expected, to apply to the Great Physician of Souls for the cure of their own spiritual diseases, and to "purify themselves even as He is pure." And those who have not the gift of tongues, are yet called on to do their best towards diffusing the knowledge and practice of the Gospel-religion among all who do lie within their reach.

That valuable Institution, the members of which are now assembled, and for which we are anxious to obtain a more general and active support from the Public, is so constituted as to enable all, whether Clergy or Laymen, to take some share—a share which they must rejoice to take, if they are Christians in any thing but in name—in the great work of promoting the coming of Christ's kingdom, and the doing of "His will on earth as in heaven," which they daily pray for. By contributing towards the support of Ministers in places where their services are much needed, and cannot without such contributions be obtained,—by thus preserving multitudes of our brethren from spiritual destitution, from gross religious ignorance, from pernicious error, from irreligion, and from sin,—the Laity as well as the Clergy may have a share in forwarding the great work for which their Saviour lived and died.

Is there any Layman of our Church who is disposed to say in his heart—"This is a valuable Institution, and one to which the *Clergy* ought to contribute liberally; it is a holy and

an important work, and one which ought to excite great interest among the *Clergy*; but religious matters are more properly *their* concern, Laymen cannot be expected to take any particular interest in the propagation of religion?"

I dwelt in the beginning of this discourse on the error of regarding Christianity as *two* religions—one for ordinary Christians, and another for "Saints"—for the "Elect"—for "God's People,"—or some particular class, party, or order of men. I dwelt, I say, on that error in especial reference to this occasion, because the prevalence of the error and its evil consequences are in no point more observable than in what relates to the distinction between the Clergy and the Laity. That there is a distinction of *offices* between the two is undeniable; but so far forth as they are Christians—i.e. (in the apostolic sense of the word) *Saints*, there is no distinction. And yet does it not often happen that such actions and such habits of life as are clearly at variance, not with the *ministerial* character only, but with the *Christian* character, are, by the world in general, thought very

lightly of in a Layman, though in a Clergyman they would be severely censured? Is it not notorious that many duties which, if the teaching of Christ and the Apostles is to be received, are not merely *clerical* duties but *Gospel* duties, are either wholly neglected, or very little attended to, by such as have not taken *holy orders*? And this temper of mind is found not least in many of those who are among the most rigid in their demands of an exemplary performance of Christian duties by the Clergy. It is commonly (and very truly) said, that the Clergy ought to be men of *exemplary life*; i. e. a life which sets a good *example to* their people: but it is remarkable that this truth is by none more earnestly dwelt on than by some of those who seem never even to think of being bound to *follow* that example, by leading the same sort of life *themselves*. Now if they really hope for salvation by means of their *pastor's* good conduct,—by *his* practice of Christian virtue in their stead,—they ought at least to be consistent in their language, and to call it, not *exemplary* virtue, but *vicarious* virtue.

But to pass over the case of those who tole-

rate in themselves unchristian habits, or who neglect Christian duties, generally, and to confine myself to one branch of Christian duty, that of labouring to spread among all, and especially among our brethren, the knowledge and practice of the Christian religion, what do we find—and what ought we to find—among the lay-members of our Church? Most true it is, that a Layman is not justified in taking on himself any that are exclusively ministerial functions—in intruding himself into what are strictly clerical offices I only wish each one who hears me to consider how far, and in what way, *without* any such intrusion, it is *possible*, and *consequently* a *duty*, for him to assist towards promoting that coming of Christ's kingdom which he is accustomed to pray for; and next, to consider how far he is himself performing that duty.

We all know that it is the proper office of the Ministers of our Church to lead the devotions of the congregation according to the Prayer-book, and to administer the Sacraments to them, and publicly to preach and expound to them the Scriptures. Is it also their sole,

or their especial office to bear all the expenses of every institution for the diffusion of Christian knowledge and practice? Can delicate scruples, and conscientious dread of unduly intruding into the ministerial office, hold back any one from contributing towards *such* an object? Can he think that indifference in such a cause, though unbecoming the *profession* of a *Clergyman*, is consistent with the profession of a *Christian*?—that the Clergy may be expected to feel a great interest in such matters; but that it is hardly to be looked for in the Laity?

If there be any who entertain *these* sentiments, I would ask such a one what he would think of our doctrine, if we were to teach that the highest glories of Heaven are reserved for the Clergy exclusively; that the souls of Laymen are of comparatively small account in their Redeemer's sight; and that the best Christians must be content with a very humble and inferior place in the mansions of eternal bliss, unless they have been admitted to holy Orders? How great would be the indignation at such a groundless and arrogant assumption

on our part, that would be felt and expressed by all;—by all, including all those who are content to forego all pretensions to an equal share in Christian *zeal*, in Gospel *duties*—though not to forego their equal claim to Christian *hopes*, to Gospel *promises*, to heavenly happiness!

Let any one of you, my Christian friends, who does feel that gratitude and love to his Saviour—that high value for the blessing of Gospel-light, which prompts him to seek how he may *do* something to manifest his sense of mercies received—let any such person behold in this Society an opportunity of promoting "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men;" not merely worldly peace, but heavenly, and divine good-will towards men.

But if, again, any one feels conscious within his own heart that his Christian gratitude, and love, and zeal, fall lamentably short of what he knows he *ought* to feel; and if he sincerely desires to kindle into warmth those sentiments which are but coldly alive within him; let him behold here one of the best exercises by which

to foster and strengthen those sentiments. For as we may observe in all departments of life, actively befriending any one increases our regard for him; actively serving our country strengthens the feeling of patriotism; activity in the service of a party strengthens party-spirit; and so of the rest. A cause in which we have exerted ourselves becomes more and more endeared to us through those very efforts. Act therefore as you *would* spontaneously and gladly act if you *had* those Christian feelings, and that Christian zeal which you know the Christian *ought* to have, and which you wish to generate and encourage in your own breast; and the very outward acts themselves, coupled with earnest petitions for Divine Grace, will produce, and strengthen, and keep up that very disposition of which such acts are the natural fruit.

I know indeed that the severe pressure of that awful visitation of famine which has fallen on this land, renders it doubly difficult at the present time to support any institution which, like this, depends on voluntary contributions. But I would remind any one who may be

disposed to make this a plea for withholding contributions from this Society, to consider that this pressure has fallen with most especial severity on the Clergy; whose means, generally speaking, are very slender, and whose charities have often more than exhausted their means; so that there is more need than ever for aid from the Laity to support any important institution which, if left to the unassisted efforts of the Clergy, must finally become extinct. But independently of this consideration, I would remind you, that to regard bodily wants and sufferings as alone calling for charitable relief, and to pay little or no attention to spiritual wants—to diseases of the soul—to the needs of those who may, or who should "hunger and thirst after righteousness"—would be quite at variance with the principles of the Gospel, and with the precepts and the example of its Author. He fed the hungry indeed, and healed the sick; but his *main* object was to teach men to know and to do the will of their Heavenly Father. He exhorted his hearers to "labour not so much for the meat that perisheth," as for that "which endureth unto ever-

lasting life;" and "to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," in preference to taking anxious thought what they should eat and drink; and He taught us, in His own form of prayer, *before* we ask for our "daily bread," to pray that his "kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

If you are in earnest when you utter those words, your actions must be of a piece with your prayers. Endeavour therefore to make known as widely as possible the existence, and the real character, and the strong claims to support, of this Society; and strive to induce your friends and neighbours—most especially by setting them the *example*—to contribute liberally, according to their ability, to its very scanty funds. Exhort those who are rich to give bountifully, and those whose means are small to remember that He who commended the widow's mite has taught us not to be ashamed to give a little, if we give not grudgingly but gladly; since "it is a cheerful giver that God loveth."

And pray therefore that He will implant in you and in your brethren a grateful, a liberal,

and a Christian heart. Pray also that He will be pleased to bless our efforts in His holy cause; and that at least that cause may not suffer through any remissness on your part;—through any preference, in you, of the perishable riches of this world, to the "treasure which neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal."

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THE END.

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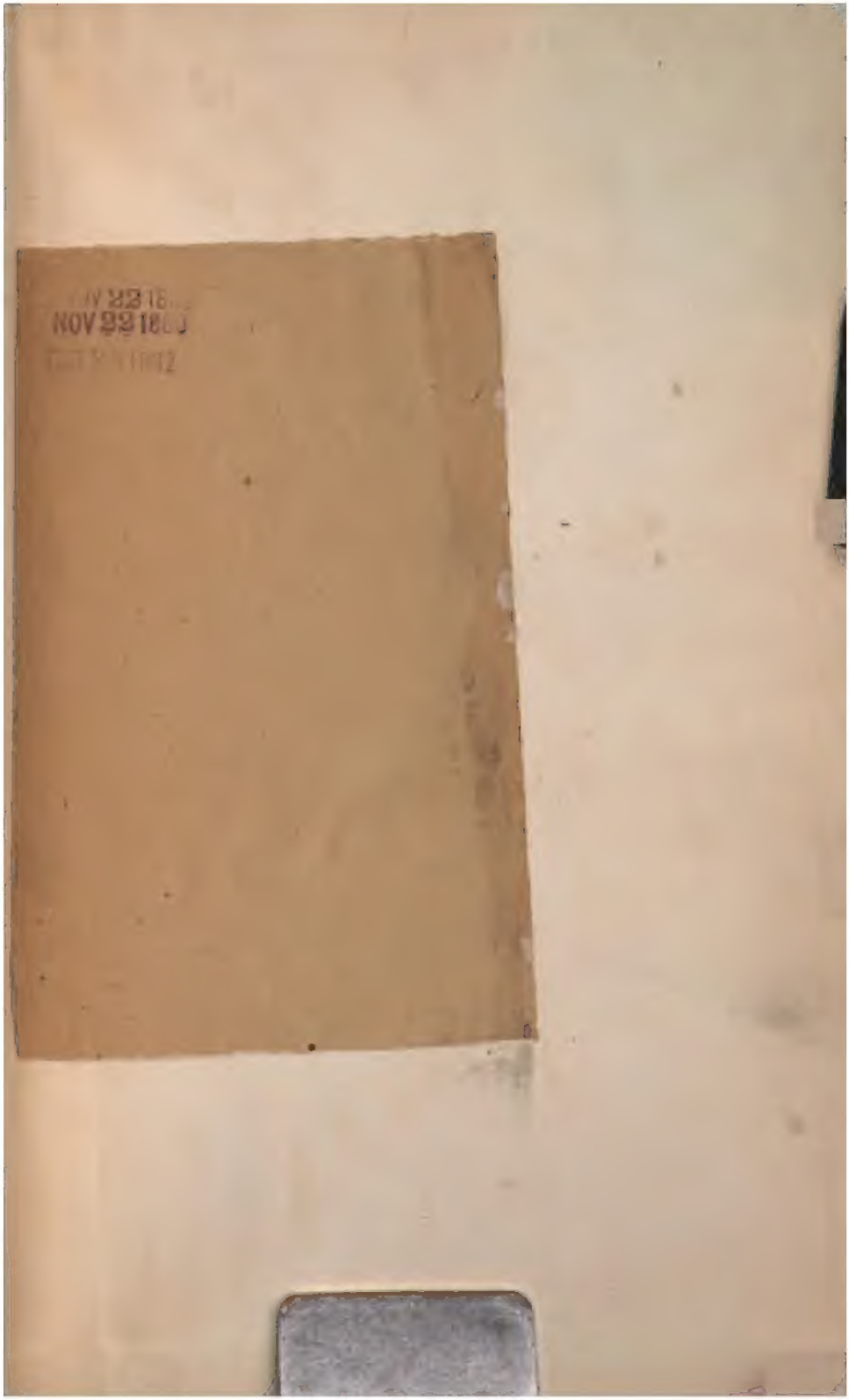
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